Commentary

Volume Sixty-one, Number Five, May 1976

Why New York Went Broke

James Ring Adams

DEMOCRACY AND EUROPEAN COMMUNISM
Hadley Arkes

THE LITVAK CONNECTION & HASIDIC CHIC
Chaim Raphael

SAVE ENERGY, SAVE A SOUL
Eugene Bardach

BIBLICAL NARRATIVE
Robert Alter

Music	Movies	Books in Review
Bach in the Original Edward Rothstein	Adèle H. Taxi Driver Seven Beauties William S. Pechter	William Petersen John Romano Joshua Rubenstein Edward N. Luttwak Josiah Lee Auspitz Jeane Kirkpatrick

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The Effects of Ice on Scotch

How fast a drink of Scotch whisky over rocks loses its flavor depends on the proof of the Scotch and the richness of its blend. These two factors are optimized for "on the rocks" Scotch drinkers in 90-Proof Famous Grouse, a venerable old brand from Scotland only recently introduced to America.

by Allen Mac Kenzie

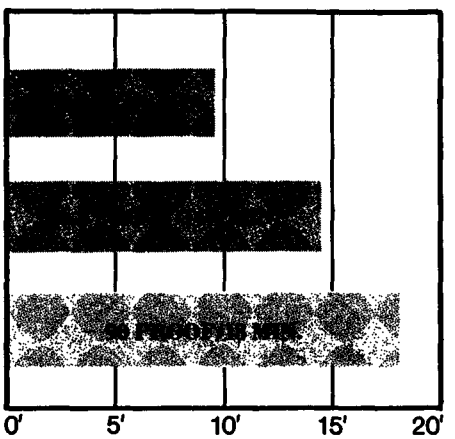
In countries where Scotch has been consumed for centuries, ice and whisky rarely mingle. But on this side of the Atlantic, the picture is quite different. While a small percentage of American Scotch drinkers take it neat, better than 35% drink it "on the rocks." The rest of us add varying amounts of water, club soda, etcetera. And ice. Always plenty of ice —the great American drink requisite.

It would seem then that the American Scotch devotee, particularly our on-the-rocks fancier, has a right to raise a serious question: *Is the Scotch I drink ideally suited to enjoyment over ice?*

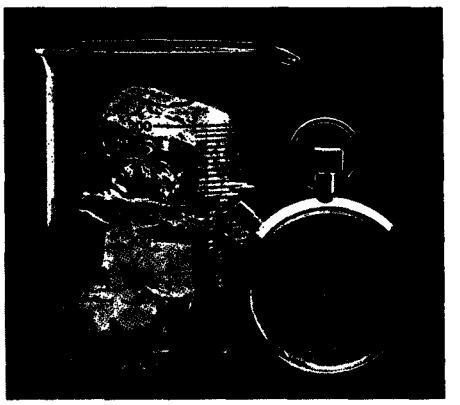
Pursuing a Perfect Proof

Let's turn our attention first to the proof at which Scotch whisky is bottled. Consider, if you will, the possibility that there is a better proof for on-the-rocks Scotch drinking than that of your current brand.

Practically every Scotch sold in this country is bottled, at 80, 86, or 86.8 Proof. So at the instant you pour Scotch over ice, it contains between 40% and 43.4% alcohol by volume. (Proof is double the percentage of alcohol.) The chilling effect of the ice is accompanied by dilution. And when your drink has been properly cooled —in 30 seconds to a minute—you achieve what one Scotch connoisseur refers to as "the ideal sip." From then on, the Scotch drinker's enjoyment typically runs downhill, as the drink loses its freshness.



TIME IT TAKES THREE DIFFERENT SCOTCHES TO DILUTE TO 45 PROOF WHEN POURED OVER ICE(IN MINUTES.)



While there is no way to preserve that fresh Scotch flavor indefinitely, we submit that you can sustain the freshness substantially longer with 90-Proof *Famous Grouse*. If you have never heard of this brand, we are not surprised. It is a well established name in Scotland, but only recently introduced to America. So far as we know, *Famous Grouse* is the only Scotch now available in this country at 90 Proof.

How Fast Does the Proof Fall?

To illustrate the merits of a slightly higher proof, we chilled a jigger of Scotch (about 1.7 ounces) with 6 one-inch ice cubes. We measured the amount of water added to the Scotch after each minute and computed the change in proof.

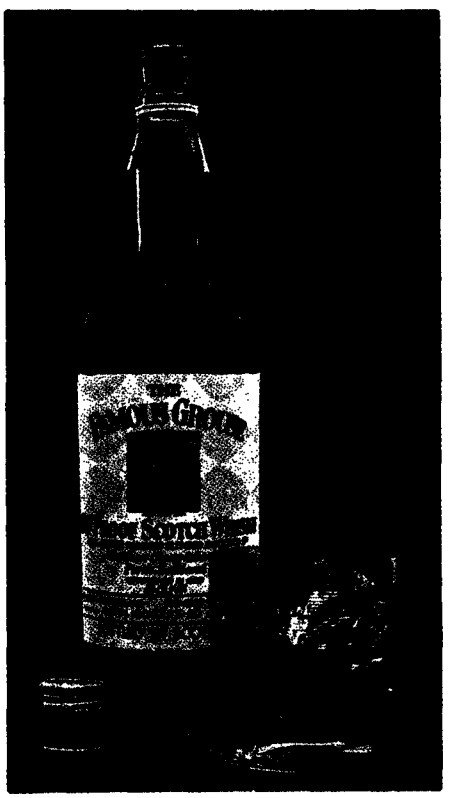
As you might expect, the proof falls rapidly during the first few minutes of cooling, but more slowly after the whisky is chilled. The diagram shows how long it takes Scotches of three different proofs to reach 45 proof when poured over ice. If proof is considered to be a measure of freshness, 90-Proof *Famous Grouse* has a 3½ minute advantage over 86.8-Proof Scotch after 18 minutes on the rocks. (Because it takes 3½ minutes longer to reach 45 proof.) Its advantage over 80-Proof Scotch is 8½ minutes.

Proof, of course, is not the only influence on the flavor of a blended Scotch. The proportion of malt to grain whiskies, origins of the malts, aging methods--these are also important factors determining the relative richness of Scotch flavor.

The makers of *Famous Grouse*—Matthew Gloag & Son of Perth, Scotland —have been producing Scotch in the same family for six generations. And they have performed their most noble feat in the rich blend they created for *Famous Grouse* Scotch. Its flavor—so remarkable at the outset—holds firmly to its character during prolonged contact with ice.

Knowledge of Scotch, however, cannot be indefinitely pursued in the abstract. Your learning process must ultimately include a leisurely sip of *Famous Grouse* on the rocks. For Scotch drinking is one of those pleasures enjoyed most, not in the pursuit, but in the conquest. Scotland's greatest bard, Robert Burns, said it best:

"Gie me a spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire."



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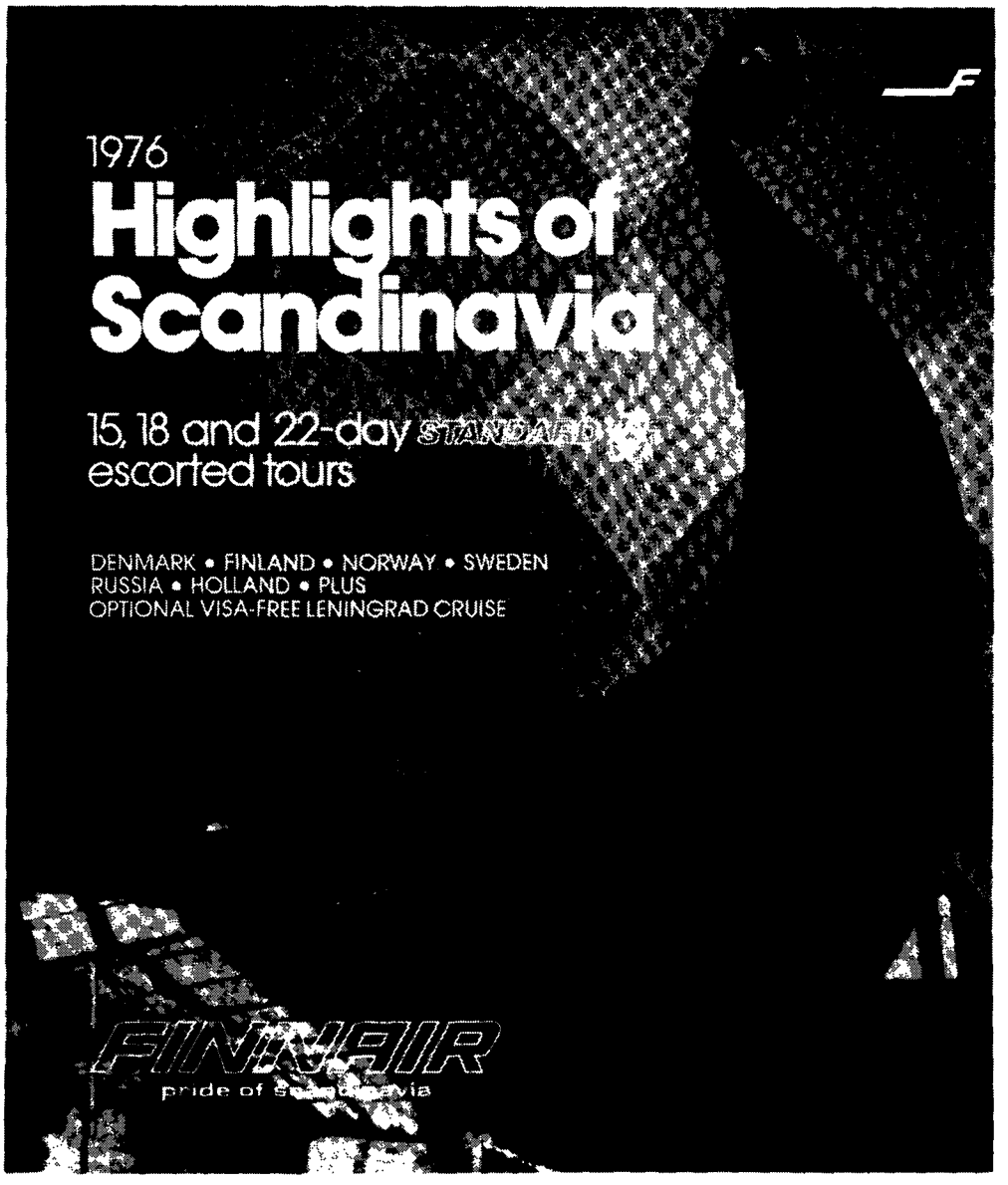

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Commentary

VOLUME 61 NUMBER 5 *MAY 1976*

Articles	31	Why New York Went Broke *James Ring Adams*
	38	Democracy and European Communism *Hadley Arkes*
	48	The Litvak Connection & Hasidic Chic *Chaim Raphael*
	54	Save Energy, Save a Soul *Eugene Bardach*
In the Community	61	Biblical Narrative *Robert Alter*
Music	68	Bach in the Original *Edward Rothstein*
Movies	72	Obsessions *William S. Pechter*
Letters	4	from *Susan Brownmiller, David M. Szonyi, S. G. Sanders, C. H. Siegel, Hugh Amory, Colin Greer, Michael Novak, Albert L. Weeks, Sol Modell, Theodore Draper, Jeremy Simcha Garber, C. Max Kortepeter, David S. Landes, Max Geltman, James J. Novak, Paul R. Porter, Norman Berdichevsky,* and others
Books in Review	78	Affirmative Discrimination, by Nathan Glazer *William Petersen*
	80	William Carlos Williams, by Reed Whittemore *John Romano*
	82	Courts of Terror: Soviet Criminal Justice and Jewish Emigration, by Telford Taylor *et al.* *Joshua Rubenstein*
	86	History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented, by Bernard Lewis *Edward N. Luttwak*
	89	On Human Conduct, by Michael Oakeshott *Josiah Lee Auspitz*
	94	Power Shift, by Kirkpatrick Sale *Jeane Kirkpatrick*

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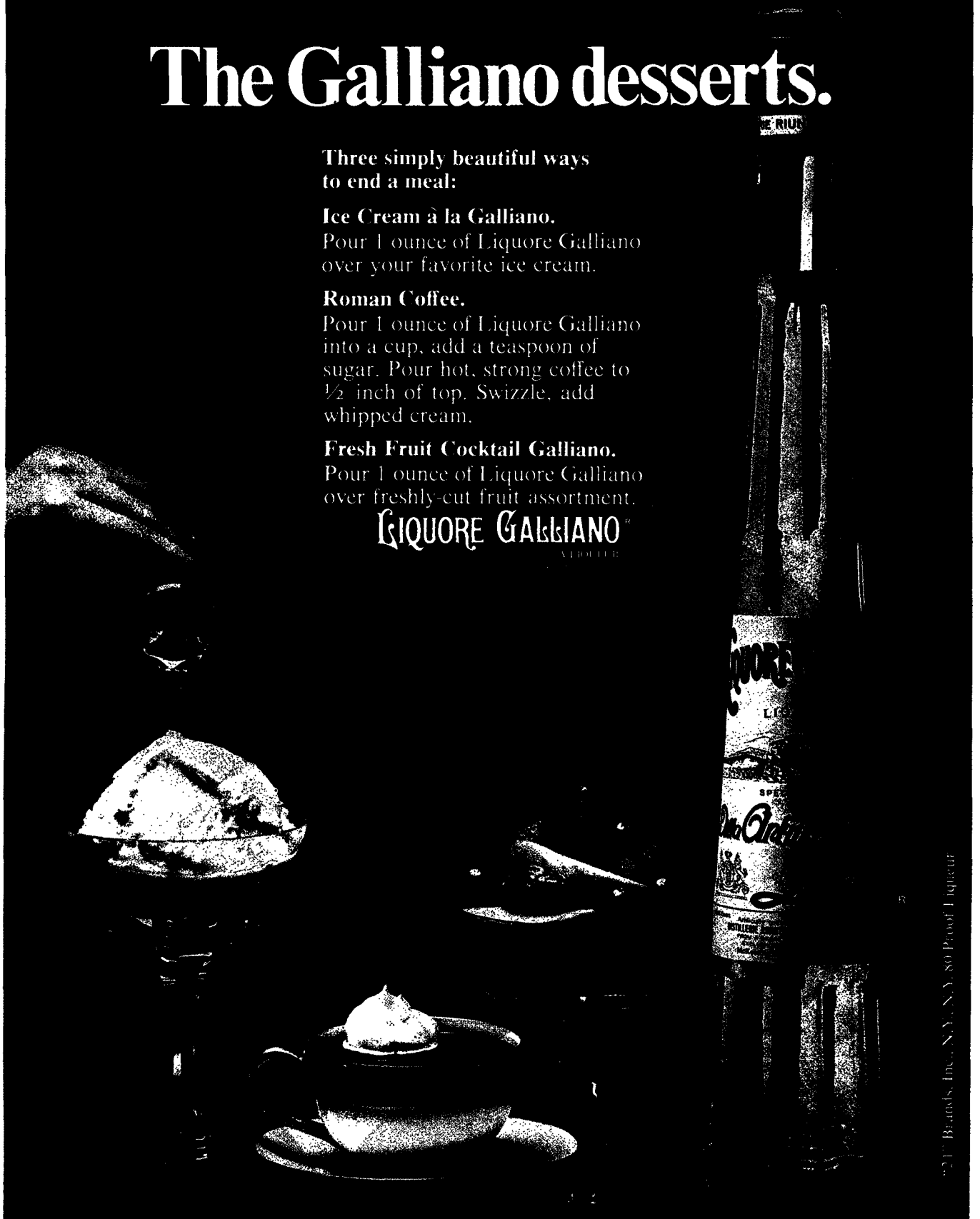

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Letters from Readers

Radical Feminism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The Nut of the Year award goes to Michael Novak for his review of *Against Our Will* [Books in Review, February]. As for the rest of you at COMMENTARY, tsk tsk.

SUSAN BROWNMILLER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Susan Brownmiller devoted four years of her life to researching the history, psychology, and sociology of rape for her nearly 500-page book, *Against Our Will*—all of which Michael Novak dismisses in two rather hysterical columns of COMMENTARY.

What makes Mr. Novak's review one of the shoddiest ever to appear in COMMENTARY is that he seems not so much to have read Miss Brownmiller's book as to have *read into* it. His very first sentence gives him away: "The manifest thesis of this book may be simply stated: it is that the basic sexual relation between men and women is rape." Having read *Against Our Will*, I know that Miss Brownmiller neither states nor implies anything of the kind. Rather, she does correlate the incidence of rape to such factors as patriarchal legal codes, war, slavery, racism, poverty, prisons, etc. It may well be true that Miss Brownmiller overstates her case in the one full sentence from the book which Mr. Novak does quote, which describes rape as "a continuous process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear" (emphasis hers), but that hardly justifies Mr. Novak's verbal caricature.

An example of such caricature is the reviewer's conclusion that *Against Our Will* is "'nothing more or less' [quoting Brownmiller out of context] than a propagandistic attack on heterosexuality and marriage (and by extension the family)" whose "militant logic makes it a tract in celebration of lesbianism and/or masturbation." Perhaps Mr. Novak will explain precisely what he means by "implicit logic"; I sense the phrase conveniently serves to mask his own fears and prejudices. Revealingly, the reviewer cites not a mite of evidence in support of his contention. Understandably so, for he would be hard put to do so: lesbianism is mentioned once in passing—in connection with women inmates; the nuclear family is only very sporadically dealt with (and at least once, in the Vietnamese context, . . . as a deterrent to rape); and "masturbation" isn't even listed in the index (what is so horrendous about masturbation, and why it should be linked with lesbianism, Mr. Novak never bothers to explain).

Finally, Mr. Novak argues that the rejection of the Equal Rights Amendment in New York this past November signified a broad-based rejection of "radical feminism," whatever that is. Anyway, if the prevalence of "radical feminism" can be measured by the success of the ERA, Mr. Novak really *does* have a great deal to fear. For the national ERA has, after all, passed both houses of Congress by well over two-thirds margins (and 517 of the 535 members of Congress are men), as well as 34 state legislatures. And the state ERA in New York, while losing, won the support of nearly 40 per cent of the voters, including a great many men. There must be a great many more "radical feminists" around than meet the eye.

In a more serious vein, once COMMENTARY made the decision to review *Against Our Will*, it had an obligation to assign it to someone who would respond to the book with an open mind. In contrast, Mr. Novak's review is fundamentally not serious: it is more of an anti-feminist diatribe. Intending perhaps to give Miss Brownmiller a verbal thrashing, the reviewer only wound up thrashing about in his own rhetoric, most of which had very little if anything to do with the multi-dimensional perspective on rape found in *Against Our Will*. How disappointing, how exasperating, to see such a normally intelligent writer as Michael Novak read so badly, analyze so little, and snap so much.

DAVID M. SZONYI
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Novak's attack on Susan Brownmiller is an incredible *ad feminam* assault. Book reviewers who do not trouble to read beyond the first chapter of a work usually do not make their negligence so glaringly apparent. In this instance

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it is not even clear that Mr. Novak read the first chapter of the right book, however, since Miss Brownmiller never makes any mention of masturbation, and hating rapists surely ought not to be equated with hating men!

Of course Miss Brownmiller may be said to exaggerate her position. She is trying to make a point. In this day and age you have to say something outrageous in order to attract any attention at all. And maybe she even believes some of the nonsense about "exploitation" with which the book begins. But the main thrust of the argument in the book is not anti-sex, much less anti-family or lesbian. Mr. Novak's accusations . . . are as crude as the sexual abuse against which Miss Brownmiller is protesting.

The principal argument of the book is that rape has nothing to do with sex. It is simply disgustingly aggravated assault. . . . The perpetrators are not mentally ill, just mean, and they ought to be jailed until they are too old to furnish any grist for the recidivism mill. This is the book's message. . . .

Miss Brownmiller goes on to discuss the high incidence of sexual abuse of children, male and female, and its unthinkable cost to the victims in trauma and guilt. She makes specific recommendations for legal reform which would make it possible to prosecute those who molest children sexually, whether the perpetrators are blood kin or not. To assert that this concern with the psychological health and welfare of babes in arms constitutes an assault on the family is both absurd and outrageous.

Rape amounts to an assault on the family, as well as on the victim. If Miss Brownmiller is too narrowly focused to see that, Mr. Novak ought not to be. Miss Brownmiller attacks prostitution and pornography, both of which degrade women and bestialize men. Only Mr. Novak sees prostitution and pornography as pillars of the family in our tradition. I know of no one who would agree with him on this point. Most of us believe prostitution and pornography to be at least highly objectionable. Even if Miss Brownmiller opposed the family in her heart, which I think is highly doubtful, following her recommendations could only work to strengthen the family. . . .

I am shocked that the editors would publish . . . what is so obviously a broadside attack against all "those feminists" lumped together without any investigation whatsoever. Maybe the women are right who say they are the new "niggers" in American society.

S. G. SANDERS
Providence, Rhode Island

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The review of *Against Our Will* is a combination of distortion and pretense, a prime example of the latter being the pretense that Michael Novak read any part of the book besides the short introduction. Mr. Novak's contention that to examine Miss Brownmiller's arguments is to involve oneself in "intellectual corruption" is laughable: it is of Mr. Novak's "intellectual corruption" one should be wary. His is the sort which manifests itself in a deliberate misstatement of the views of one's ideological opponents.

Miss Brownmiller does not equate the primal act of intercourse with an act of rape. Her definition of rape is contained on page 18, a page Mr. Novak either forgot about, deliberately ignored, or never read: "If a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man chooses to proceed against her will, that is a criminal act of rape."

Miss Brownmiller does not propagandize against heterosexuality and marriage. She objects to a certain form of both: one in which women are regarded as things to be conquered, won, or sold, as prey to be captured, or as chattels to be claimed and owned. As for Mr. Novak's assertion that Miss Brownmiller is celebrating lesbianism, I think that she would find no more merit in a female's possessing a certain attitude toward women than in a male's possessing that attitude. That Mr. Novak believes Miss Brownmiller stupid enough to assert, even implicitly, that the practices of lesbianism and masturbation are preventatives of rape or solutions to the problem, is evidence of Mr. Novak's attitude toward women, particularly toward those who question the role men like Mr. Novak have assigned them. Mr. Novak's further contention that women who voted against the ERA in New York were casting a vote against everything radical feminism stands for is a testament to his own misunderstanding of the radical feminist position and his willingness to promulgate and to perpetuate the misunderstanding.

Miss Brownmiller does not have contempt for women as victims. She herself describes the change in her attitude toward victims of rape from one of contempt to one of compassion and activist concern. Her contempt is for the attitude that women have been, are, and always will be, unable to protect themselves and thus are meant, in some strangely deterministic sense of that word, to be victims, to be possessed by men, to be dependent upon men for their personal, physical safety. She is intent upon showing just how prevalent this attitude is. . . .

Mr. Novak seems to think that a valid indication of the acceptability of Miss Brownmiller's thesis is the number of volumes she has sold. If he is consistent and if he judges his own work on the same basis, then he must acknowledge the unacceptability of his own views: I haven't noticed his name on any best-seller lists this year either. He attributes the selection of the book by the New York *Times Book Review* as one of the ten best of the year, and the selection of its author by *Time* as one of the persons of the year, to the paranoia of the media in regard to feminism. I think it interesting that Mr. Novak received neither sort of recognition. As his review is replete with those ideas which are the bastion of male priggery and domination (that radical feminists hate men, sex, and the family, that radical feminists are advocates of masturbation and lesbianism), it would not surprise me to find out that the vindictiveness and malicious distortion found in this review are due to Mr. Novak's anger at being bested by a woman.

C. H. SIEGEL
Houston, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Novak seems to have lost not only his masculinity but also (which is worse) his ability to read; after this second impotence, there is no other. Miss Brownmiller's thesis is not that "the basic sexual relation between men and women is rape" nor does she, even implicitly, argue for masturbation and lesbianism as "an ideal way of life" —whatever this criticism, which appears to confound life and technique, is supposed to mean. She argues rather that the crime of rape is an archaic legal institution, originally designed to protect male property in women, not to protect

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women (or anyone else) from sexual violation; and her very plain thesis is that the crime should be redefined as a form of aggravated assault, whether committed on man, woman, or child. . . . She explicitly states, indeed, that masturbation is preferable to rape and I think she would agree that a lesbian relationship between consenting adults has much, by comparison, to recommend it—but who would not?

Having thus totally distorted Miss Brownmiller's findings and thesis, Mr. Novak appeals for proof of his interpretation to the "ideological mushiness" of New York critics and to his own belief that *Against Our Will* has not made "the major lists" (unnamed) because (pseudo-fact?) women will not buy it. The hopeless obtuseness of this review might be safely ignored, but when Mr. Novak preens himself on his insight and intellectual courage in standing up for Mom and the kids, I protest.

HUGH AMORY
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Michael Novak tells us that the vote against the Equal Rights Amendment was not a vote against its particulars; it was a vote against lesbianism and on behalf of the family. He may be right. There are unfortunate associations in the public mind and terribly confused messages from the media. But why doesn't he lament that result; why does he regard the vote as courageous? . . . Why doesn't he separate the issues for us? . . . Why does he cement his confusion in a review of a book which is only tentatively connected to the Equal Rights Amendment?

COLIN GREER
Social Policy
New York City

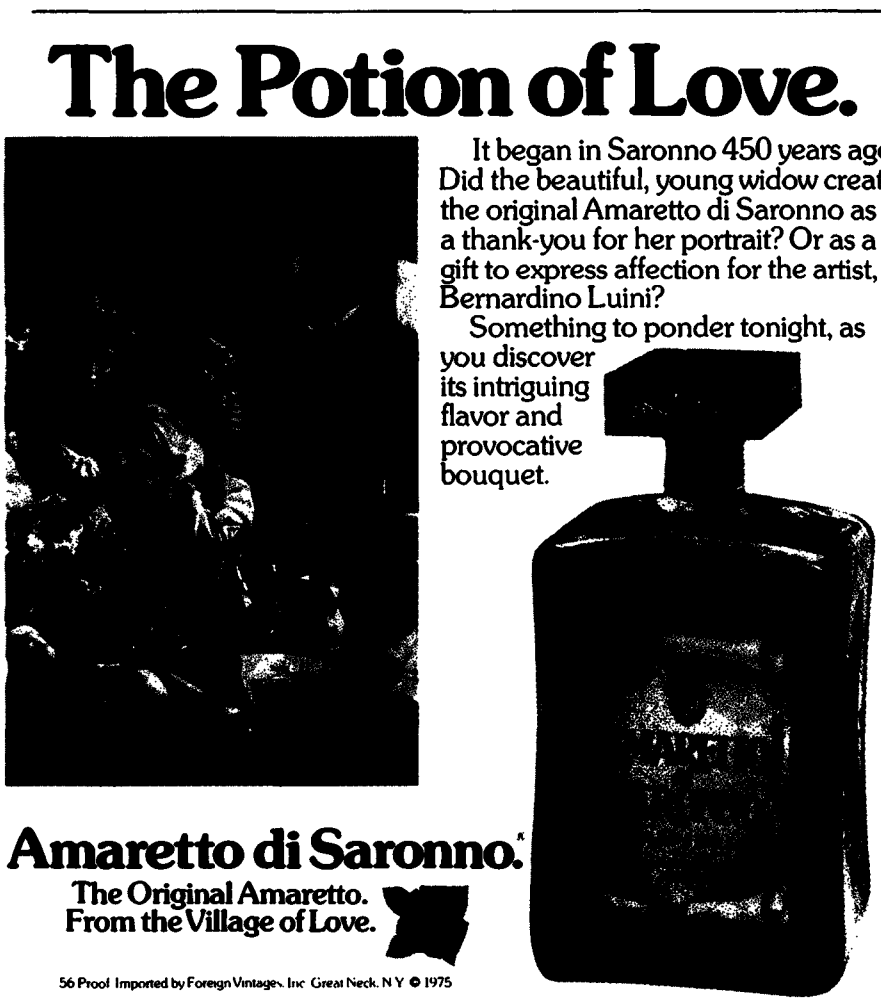
MICHAEL NOVAK writes:

Letters on my review would, I knew, make assault on virtually every quality—sensibility, intelligence, morality, sanity. They would be deep in the grip of high moral intentions, stuck tight in that grip by outrage at criminal rape. Their writers would, some of them, assume that radical feminism is a humanistic, liberating, and moral force in our society; and that to stand with it is virtuous, against it villainous. They would give Miss Brownmiller's book a favorable reading by failing to take seriously the strong language in which she couches the ideology and logic of her argument; they would lightly brush aside her "exaggerations" and "overstatements" and find in her words, instead, the book that *they* would have written. These letters are worse than my expectations.

I also dreaded the necessity of opening that corrupting book again. I had read it at least three times. (My correspondents seem to wish testimonials on such matters.) The first draft of my review exceeded thirty pages; the second draft twenty pages. I still feel dirty from the exercise.

Here again the key words: "From prehistoric times to the present, I believe, rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear" (emphasis Brownmiller's). That makes me and all men conscious agents of rape. Miss Brownmiller calls the male genitalia "a weapon to generate fear." Again: "By anatomical fiat—the inescapable construction of their genital organs—the human male was a natural predator. . . ." Again: "One possibility, and one possibility only, was available to women. . . . Female fear of an open season of rape, and not a natural inclination toward monogamy, motherhood, or love, was probably the single causative factor in the original subjugation of woman by man, the most important key to her historic dependence, her domestication by protective mating." Thus Miss Brownmiller's vision of the life of our two sexes. The texts are easily multiplied.

When did you last rape a woman? It is unworthy of any male reviewer to reply to the accusations made in this book. The view of sex involved in it is among the most corrupt in the annals of any literature. It is especially corrupt because it attempts to manipulate our natural revulsion against rape. We who are not rapists are supposed to assume the guilt of rapists. We are led to think in the reading, as Miss Brownmiller did in the writing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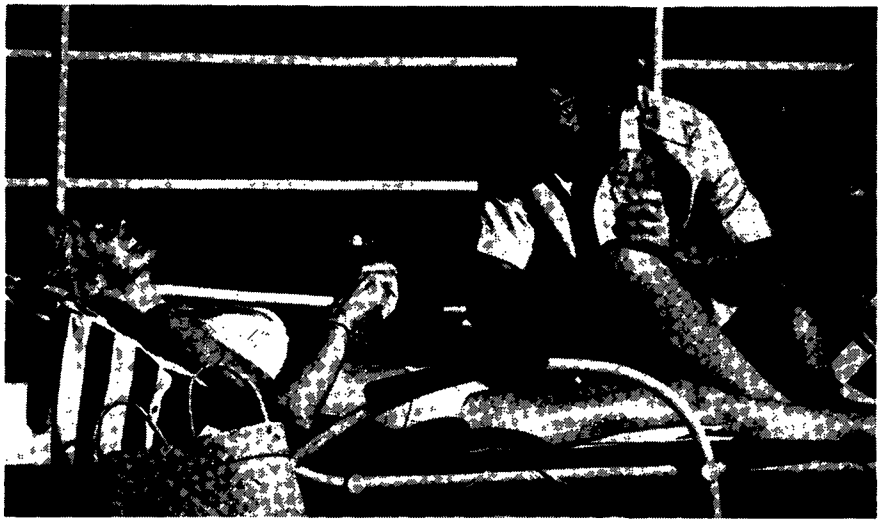

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(according to her words in the Washington *Post*): "You get deep into your work and you get so involved that you begin to think rape is the basis of the sex act." The book will not allow us merely to study criminal rape and learn how to reduce its frequency. It demands far more of us than that. That extra ideological load is its corruption, and it is basic to the book's intention and execution.

Thinking clearly is one way to distinguish excess ideology from limited and clear issues. Radical feminists—they call themselves by that name, David M. Szonyi might note, should he examine their published writings—prosper by public confusion. Miss Brownmiller's book is an excellent case in point. Who could disagree with the thesis that criminal rape is criminal and should be reduced as much as possible? But her thesis implicates us in far more than that. For example, that rapists are agents of all other men; that on rapists "rests an age-old burden that amounts to an historic mission: the perpetuation of male domination over women by force"; and that "men who commit rape have served in effect as front-line masculine shock troops, terrorist guerrillas" in the service of all other men.

S. G. Sanders notes that Miss Brownmiller "exaggerates," "says something outrageous in order to attract attention," and champions "nonsense." So said I. Sanders then reads "the main thrust of the argument of the book" as though Miss Brownmiller has disowned what she earlier wrote. She does not. It is integral to her vision. Sanders does not take her seriously.

Far more men suffer under aggravated assault than women under rape, so, contrary to S. G. Sanders, rape must have *something* to do with sex. Is it necessary to say that I believe rapists should be jailed (did I need Miss Brownmiller for that?), or that I believe prostitution and pornography to be "at least highly objectionable"? I detest being forced into such platitudes when my assent is really being sought for other ends.

C. H. Siegel doesn't grasp the shortcut provided by masturbation and lesbianism; but radical thinkers must be supposed to intend radical interpretations: "Had it not been for this act of biology, an accommodation requiring the locking together [Brownmiller's image] of two separate parts, penis into va-

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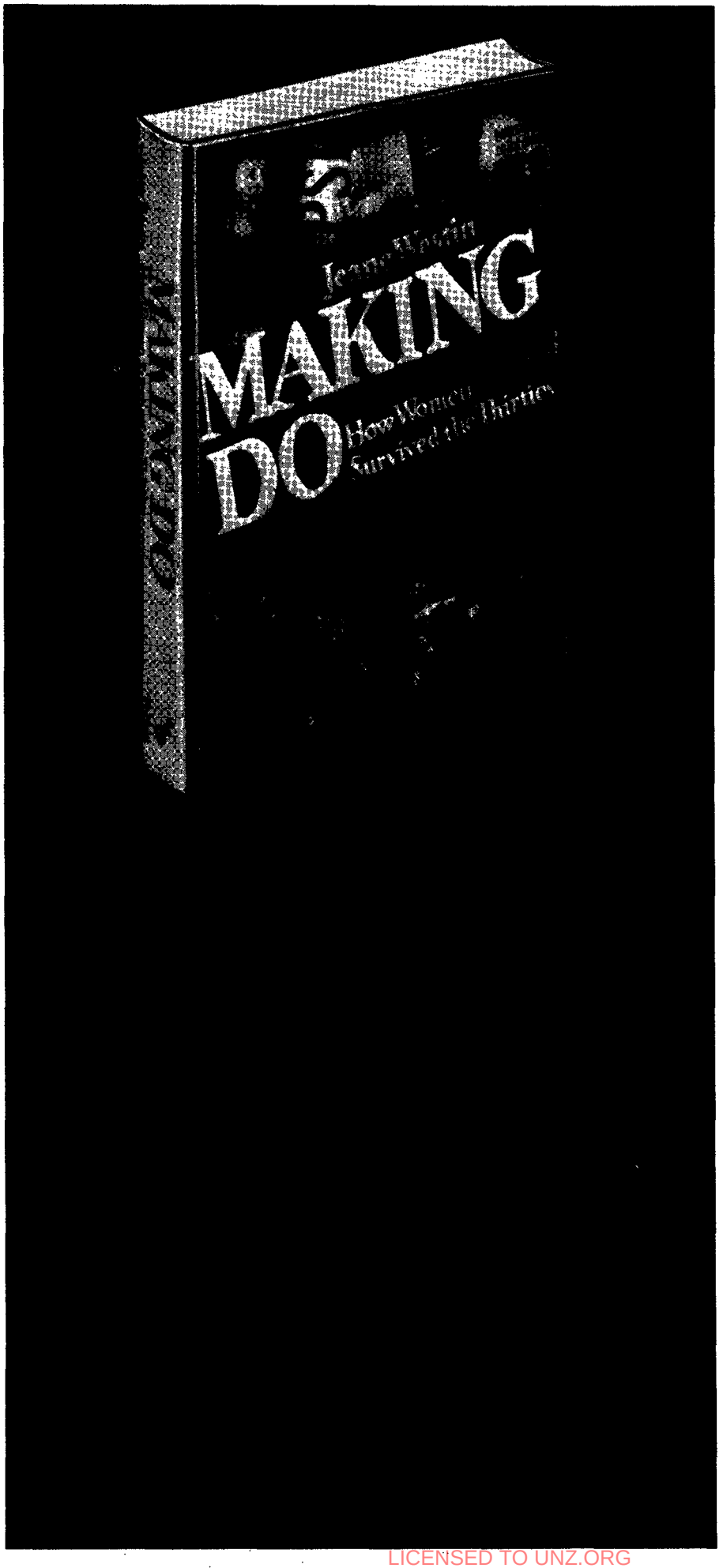

gina, there would be neither copulation nor rape as we know it. . . . This single factor may have been sufficient to have caused the creation of the male ideology of rape." Remove men, remove rape. Has C. H. Siegel not been reading radical feminist literature or not attending to the recent public arguments of NOW? Miss Brownmiller's book fills a significant gap in radical feminist ideology; it is not an isolated book, or without an intellectual and sociological context.

What does Hugh Amory mean by "masculinity"? Owning "a weapon to generate fear"? He is condescending to Miss Brownmiller, accepting from the complex tissue of her confusions only what was well known before she "devoted four years of her life" (Szonyi) to her subject. But "the crime of rape" is not "an archaic legal institution," even to Miss Brownmiller.

"There are," Colin Greer writes, "unfortunate associations in the public mind and terribly confused messages from the media." By lamenting these in Miss Brownmiller, whose book was itself one of the great "media events" of last year, I was of course lamenting them in the general case. By taking one clear analytic step with Miss Brownmiller, I hoped to clarify the general atmosphere, so that, indeed, issues like equal pay for equal work might become separated in the public mind from the fog created both by Miss Brownmiller and the sisters she explicitly thanks for her conversion: "Something important and frightening to contemplate had been left out of my education—a way of looking at male-female relations, at sex, at strength, and at power. . . . I found myself forced by my sisters in feminism to look it squarely in the eye." To note that a widely publicized writer was forced, somehow, to look at life crookedly and in unbelievably distorted ways is one function, is it not, of social criticism concerned with social policy?

Miss Brownmiller's tsk-tsk makes me recall third grade, and so does her idiom. But these are adult issues, and what she has written she is saddled with until she has another "revelation."

Détente

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Appeasement & Détente" [February] Theodore Draper skillfully nails down the several contra-

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dictions in Kissinger's policy toward the Soviet Union. But Mr. Draper ignores what is perhaps the principal antagonism built into Kissinger's own version of . . . diplomacy: his expectation of the de-ideologization of Soviet policy which, it turns out, has been contradicted by the reality of Soviet re-ideologization. One of Kissinger's fundamental tenets, and a legacy of his studies of the early 19th-century diplomacy of Metternich, is the necessity to banish ideology and its world-girdling pretensions from the business of diplomacy and the relations between nation-states, particularly the superpowers. In several of his writings in the 1960's he not only expressed the hope of Soviet ideological decay . . . but predicted that de-ideologization had to occur given the obsolescent (and dangerous) doctrines of Marx and Lenin which are poorly suited as either descriptions or prescriptions in the modern technical and thermonuclear age.

Unfortunately, but quite predictably even at the time Mr. Kissinger expressed these hopes, the Soviets have not only stubbornly refused to disarm themselves ideologically, they have rearmed themselves in both the ideological and military sense. Instead of accepting what Kissinger always hoped they would —worldwide "legitimacy," the acceptance of an international framework without revolution and violence—the Soviets have rejuvenated their nearly seventy-year-old creed of Bolshevism (dating back to Lenin's . . . *What Is To Be Done?*). Mr. Kissinger wrote in *The Troubled Partnership* (1965) that probably all that remained of Soviet ideology was the inspirational aspect . . . which instructs that the coming of Communism worldwide is "inevitable," or the use of ideology as a crutch, to justify one-party dictatorship in the USSR.

But Vietnam and Angola, as well as other strategic targets, . . . were products of ideology above all else. The Soviet navy is perfectly able to prowl the waters of the western Pacific, the Malaccan Strait, and the Indian Ocean without Camranh Bay or Hanoi harbor, nor is even the coastline of Angola indispensable to them as a means of interdicting the sealanes from the Mediterranean, around the Cape, and onward to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Instrumental, perhaps crucial, in the thrust of Soviet power around the world are the Soviets' ideological commitments. At any rate, they are far more operational today than Kissinger hoped or imagined they would be. . . .

ALBERT L. WEEKS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

With a few significant exceptions, Theodore Draper's article is a fine contribution to the discussion of this subject. There is no need to examine in detail the meticulous and thorough job he has done to prove that appeasement is not only the fundamental consequence of Henry Kissinger's policy of détente but is actually built into that policy and is inseparable from it. I would, rather, like to deal with those few exceptions referred to above.

Mr. Draper states that "most of the debate on détente has made it appear that the only alternatives are détente and cold war." It is true that *some* of the debate on détente has been conducted along these lines, but not most of it. Should not Mr. Draper have stressed the fact that it is mainly Kissinger, on the many occasions that he has referred to the question of alternatives, who has insisted that the alternatives are détente or nuclear holocaust? It is precisely here that Kissinger has most clearly demonstrated the execrable nature of his policies and the nefarious tactics he has employed to beat down the opposition to them. The fact is that during most of the thirty-odd years that have elapsed since the development of atomic weapons, the United States and the Soviet Union have existed under the circumstance of "cold war," but they have *not* engaged in nuclear warfare. Détente is a rather recent phenomenon and has had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that nuclear weapons have not been employed by the superpowers against each other. Kissinger's insistence that the *only* alternatives are mutual annihilation or détente constitutes a blatant attempt to blackmail the American people into accepting his policy of piecemeal surrender to Soviet Communism. As Winston Churchill correctly stated some years ago, it is only the "balance of terror" that has prevented a nuclear war between the superpowers. The choices, therefore, are *not limited* to détente or nuclear holocaust, and fear of atomic war need not

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force us to surrender to Henry Kissinger and his appeasement policies.

Mr. Draper also asserts, with the implication that he agrees—or so it appears to me—that "on the American side, it was always recognized that the Soviets were mainly interested in détente for economic reasons." In my opinion it cannot be sufficiently emphasized that while the Soviets are enormously interested in American technology, products, and credits, these things are not their main interest but are merely means to an end. That end is political and it is a goal that the Russian Communist leadership has never forgotten, lost sight of, or compromised: nothing less than the conquest of the world by a Communist dictatorship. . . .

After quoting Kissinger's December 1975 statement that "'The United States will not accept Soviet military expansion of any kind,'" Mr. Draper asserts that "Kissinger has now been forced to give up in fact, if not in name, one of the underlying myths of détente—the theory that the Soviet Union has become a status-quo power." This is an example, in my opinion, of a regrettable kind of naiveté. In the first place, the United States has accepted (in Vietnam), *is* accepting (in Angola . . .), and, if détente continues to be the policy of our government, will continue to accept, Soviet military expansion. In the second place, there is no concrete evidence that Kissinger "has been forced to give up" the theory that the Soviet Union has become a status-quo power. Kissinger's approach to the SALT "arms-control talks" has not undergone any significant change. This despite incontrovertible evidence from the most reputable sources that the Soviets are engaged in a massive drive to become the dominant military power in the world. In the tragic aftermath of the Western surrender at Helsinki, which was largely engineered by Kissinger, the American Secretary of State has exhibited no indication that he recognizes the importance of Russia's violations of the terms of this covenant. Kissinger is still pursuing a policy in the Middle East which seeks to compel Israel to make uncompensated sacrifices for the benefit of the intransigent Arab "confrontation states"—a policy that can lead only to the strengthening of the Soviet Union's position in that strategic region of the world. By undercutting the position of Ambassador Moynihan in the UN and forcing his resignation, Kissinger has sent a message to the world: he will do little to challenge the Communist-Arab conspiracy to utilize the UN as an instrument to achieve the isolation and emasculation of Israel.

This takes us back to the fundamental political question. . . . Mr. Draper says that "Kissinger is finally right on the strategic problem: the Soviet Union is in an imperial, expansionist phase." If that were the full extent of the strategic problem, it might conceivably be manageable and it would be possible to discuss it calmly, unhurriedly, even dispassionately. But, unfortunately, such is not the case. Surely Mr. Draper knows that the basic strategic problem is *not* Soviet expansionism. The basic problem is nothing less than the implacable Soviet drive to establish its brand of Communism throughout the world: in Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, *and* North America, including the United States. It is for this reason that we must reject the concept that the Soviets are "mainly interested in détente for economic reasons." They support détente because it has so admirably suited their purposes. While Americans have viewed détente as a process of relaxation of tensions, the Russians have utilized it as a cloak to hide their true goals. When Russian spokesmen are finally compelled to admit that for them "détente belongs exclusively to the sphere of inter-state relations" (essentially unilateral American concessions and the avoidance of nuclear war), they are confessing that they fully intend to pursue their grand strategy and that nothing but superior power will stop them. Therefore, the protection of America's most vital national interests requires that Kissinger and détente be exposed for what they truly are—the greatest danger to peace and security of the United States since the end of World War II.

SOL MODELL
Los Angeles Valley College
Van Nuys, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Theodore Draper's "Appeasement & Détente" is a scholarly and well-documented presentation. For those who, after Portugal, Helsinki, and Angola still believe in the deception called détente, I would like to quote a portion of a speech delivered in December 1974 by Malcolm MacIntosh, Secretary of the Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization: "Any thought that parity or equivalence with the United States should turn the Soviet Union into a satisfied or a status-quo power, content to settle down with the United States, Western Europe, and the rest of the world in an atmosphere of relaxation or 'live and let live' is totally foreign to current Soviet philosophies and outlooks. . . . To the Russians, the United States is fundamentally a hostile power to be weakened and outwitted whenever possible." . . .

ALBERT ECKSTEIN
Phoenix, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The remarkable article, "Appeasement & Détente," is clearly a breakthrough in the SALT-related debate. At last someone has offered a full response to the earlier nagging question, "What do the critics of détente offer as an alternative?" . . .

DAVID C. PHILLIPS
Colorado Springs, Colorado

THEODORE DRAPER writes:

I agree with Albert L. Weeks that Soviet ideology was prematurely buried—in the West. Ideology is essential to the Soviet Union if only because it provides a basis of legitimacy for the regime and—more important at present—morally and politically legitimates the claimed prerogative of world leadership. Those who have maintained that ideology no longer plays a practical role in Soviet policy and action were wrong for precisely the most practical of reasons—ideology functions as the moral and political rationalization and cover for Soviet expansionism. The theory of Soviet "de-ideologization" went along with the illusion of the Soviet Union as a status-quo power. Strangely enough, both these myths found a home in the West, especially in academic circles, while official Soviet spokesmen have loudly protested—now more than ever—that ideology suffuses Soviet policy and that the Soviet Union has no intention of preserving the international status quo.

As for Sol Modell, I do not see the necessity for such sharp contentiousness. I wrote that, after the October 1973 war, Henry Kissinger and others began to counterpose

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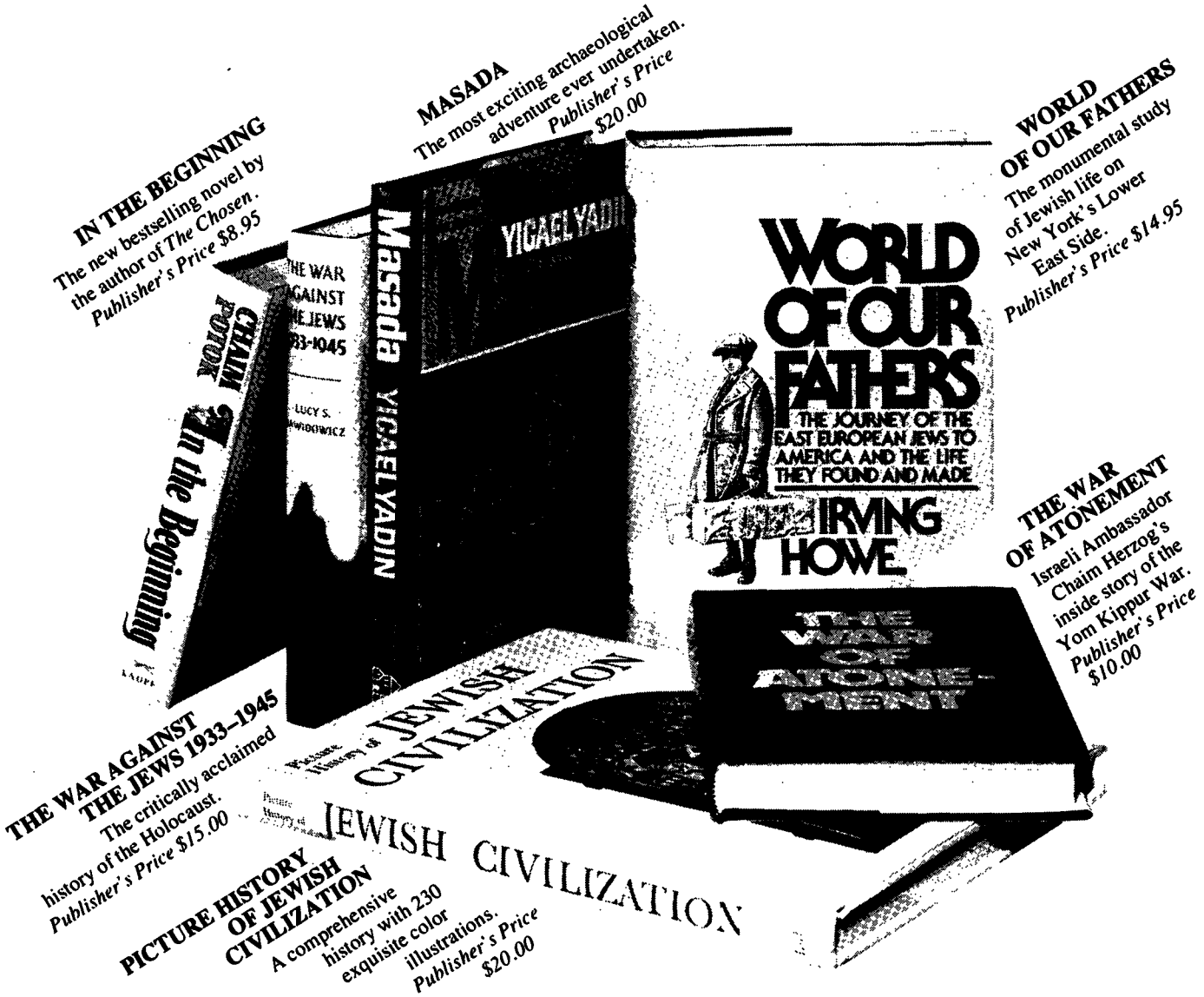
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détente and nuclear war. That the Soviets were mainly interested in détente for economic reasons surely does not imply that the Soviets wish to strengthen their economy exclusively for its own sake or as an end in itself. Nevertheless, it is what they can concretely achieve by détente; "the conquest of the world by a Communist dictatorship" is a far larger goal than can be encompassed by détente alone; there is a sense in which everything serves that goal, before détente, during détente, and after détente. Thus the larger goal does not define just what the Soviets hope to gain by détente.

My alleged naiveté escapes me. I said that Kissinger has been forced to give up the *theory* that the Soviet Union has become a status-quo power. An expansionist power clearly cannot be a status-quo power. All that happened in Vietnam and Angola, Helsinki and the UN, is beside this point.

The last paragraph in Mr. Modell's letter baffles me. I do not see the striking difference between saying that the Soviet Union is in "an imperial, expansionist phase" and saying that there is an "implacable Soviet drive to establish its brand of Communism throughout the world," etc.

Palestine

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Palestine Before the Zionists" [February] David S. Landes gives an important account of the discrimination and poverty suffered by the Jews of Palestine during the 19th century. It is unfortunate, however, that as a result of the absurd propaganda churned out by Arab delegations at the UN and elsewhere, Jews feel obliged to defend the image of the Jews of Ottoman Palestine as a native population. . . .

The record shows that this was far from the case. Palestinian Jewry was part of the Diaspora in all respects except for its physical location. Contrary to the implication of Mr. Landes's article, Jews did not survive the period of Islamic hegemony in Palestine simply by "shifting their residence at the dictates of their overlords, accommodating themselves to the tolerances of the successive rulers of the land." The Jewish population was repeatedly decimated by famine, plague, or massacre and if not for a small but continuing immigration, the number of Jews in Palestine would have been negligible. The immigrants spoke the languages of their communities of origin: Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Persian, Arabic, etc., even after six or more generations. They preserved their Diaspora customs and attitudes, and clung tightly to their socio-cultural groupings. Also, as Mr. Landes notes, they lived almost entirely off the contributions of the Diaspora.

Mr. Landes's effort to create the impression of an autonomous Jewish community in Palestine is, in fact, detrimental to the argument for the legitimacy of Zionism. For if the Jews of 19th-century Palestine are seen merely as a national minority, the Muslims were justified in their anger toward the tremendous influx of foreign co-ethnics, who arrived with the intention of eventually reconstituting their sovereignty. This tenuous and unhelpful line of thought arises because Mr. Landes has, in part, fallen into the trap of the Jordanian ambassador and others who would like to remove all mention of Palestine. If, however, one regards the land of Israel as the ancestral Jewish homeland, repopulated by the Zionists in an attempt to save the Jewish people from physical and cultural destruction, one need not make the illusory distinction between Palestinian and Diaspora Jewry in order to see Jewish settlement as a legitimate endeavor.

JEREMY SIMCHA GARBER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was surprised that David S. Landes, whose scholarly work I have admired, would choose to focus his attention on the small Jewish *Yishuv* in Palestine prior to the second *Aliyah* as typical of Arab-Jewish relations throughout the Islamic period. . . .

The wretched souls, whether Jewish or Christian, who wended their way to the Holy Land to die on sacred soil prior to this century were mostly penniless and half-starved, kept alive only by handouts from often rapacious monks, rabbis, and officials and some well-meaning philanthropists. Is this the "excuse" Mr. Landes presents for the fear/hate complex induced in the Jews of this era by Czarist Russia and Nazi Germany and now gratuitously transferred to the Palestinian *fellahin* and other Arabs simply because they were found to

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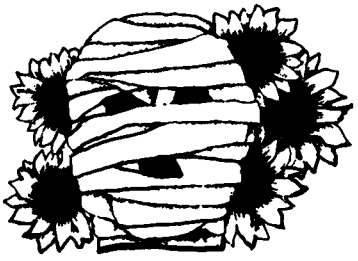

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be even more oppressed than the Jews of Russia, though without any international sympathy or support, their "fault" being that they lived on and tried to defend the land which the Russian Jews coveted?

Young people, regardless of nominal religious affiliation, will do well to look forward to the day when the current generation of apologists disguised as historians will move on to "make deserts bloom" elsewhere so that a new generation of scholars can get away from the stereotypes of Mr. Landes, "the ever-oppressed, but innocent Jew" and the "evil Arab," and simply study mankind for what it is, sometimes splendid, sensitive, and generous, and sometimes depraved and unbalanced. Unless Mr. Landes somewhere along the way discovers that cross-cultural studies require the humility of the devout scholar of yore and the tools of the anthropologist and psychologist today, I don't believe his new study of the Middle East conflict will be worth the effort.

C. MAX KORTEPETER
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature
New York University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David S. Landes's article . . . is moving, forceful, timely, and historically revealing. Unfortunately, it will probably not find its way into the minds of those who most need it. One wonders, however, why Mr. Landes elected to use the King James translation of Jeremiah's Lamentations rather than the Masoretic Text of the Jewish Publication Society, although the difference between the two . . . is more one of sentiment than of substance.

HARVEY T. ADELSON
Montvale, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although David S. Landes has definitively disposed of the notion that pre-Zionist Palestine was a tolerable place for a Jew to be, your readers may be interested in the graphic description of the situation of the Jews in Jerusalem written in 1839 by the first British consul in Jerusalem, William T. Young, to Lord Palmerston. This letter is to be found in the Public Record Office in London (F.O. 78/368); also, it has been printed in Albert Montefiore Hyamson's *The British Consulate in Jerusalem in Relation to the Jews of Palestine, 1838-1914* (originally published in 1939, and reprinted in 1975 by AMS Press, Inc.). The letter is dated May 25, 1839, and reads in part as follows:

> The Jews in Jerusalem are in general very poor, there are a few whose means are sufficient to make them independent of the contributions sent from Europe. For the past few years these contributions have been gradually diminishing, in consequence of which those who are dependent on this source chiefly for their subsistence are in a state of complete indigence, as their pecuniary means have diminished, the necessaries of life have increased in price. . . . At the moment I am addressing Your Lordship, the whole Jewish people are suffering the greatest distress—and if some relief be not afforded them by their brethren in Europe, whole families must, during this next winter, perish from want. . . .
>
> The Pacha has shewn much more consideration for the Jews than his people have. . . . Still, the Jew in Jerusalem is not estimated in value much above a dog—and scarcely a day passes that I do not hear of some act of tyranny and oppression against a Jew, chiefly by the soldiers, who enter their houses and *borrow* whatever they require without asking any permission. . . . In two instances, I have succeeded in obtaining justice for Jews against Turks. But it is quite a new thing in the eyes of these people to claim justice for a Jew—and I have good reason to think that my endeavors to protect the Jews have been, and may be for some little time to come, detrimental to my influence with other classes, Christians as well as Turks. . . .
>
> So soon as the plague is reported to be in the city, the Jews at once become the object of cupidity, to every employee in the quarantine service who, with the native practitioners in medicine, rob and oppress them to the last degree. From one individual alone, of the better class, they succeeded lately in obtaining 4,000 piastres, equal to £40 Sterling in bribes. His son was sick with the fever, they declared it to be plague, set a guard on his house, deprived him of all means of obtaining medical assistance. The patient died, and then, on his refusing to satisfy their demands, they threatened to burn everything in his house. This My Lord is not a solitary instance.
>
> What the Jew has to endure, at all hands, is not to be told.

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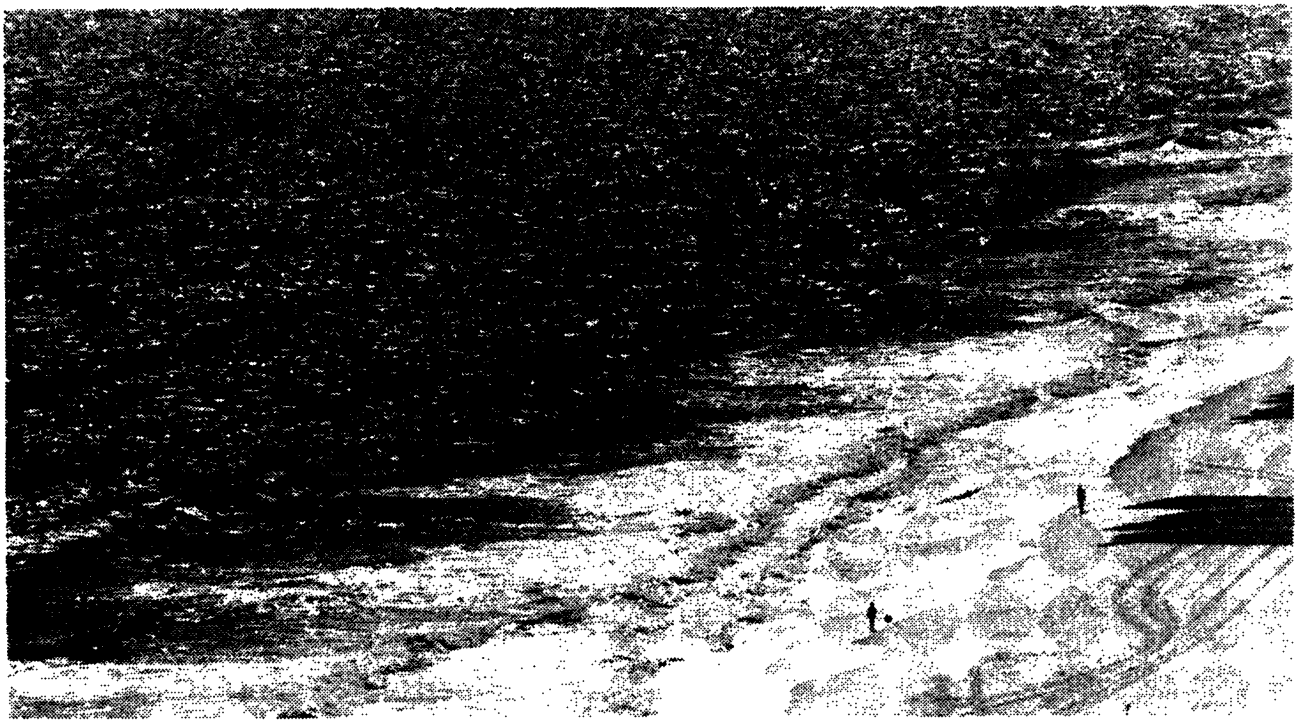

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Like the miserable dog without an owner, he is kicked by one because he crosses his path, and cuffed by another because he cries out. To seek redress he is afraid, lest it bring worse upon him; he thinks it better to endure than to live in expectations of his complaint being revenged upon him. . . .

MARTIN GREEN
Washington, D. C.

DAVID S. LANDES writes:

Jeremy Simcha Garber is unhappy with what he calls my "efforts to create the impression of an autonomous Jewish community in Palestine," which he finds "detrimental to the argument for the legitimacy of Zionism." On the first point, I have apparently not made myself clear. When I wrote of communal autonomy (the *millet* system) in the Ottoman empire, I did not mean the separation of these groups from co-religionists outside the empire. Just as the Maronites had close ties with the Catholic church, so the Jews of Palestine were part and parcel of the larger Jewish people. This is a point that I thought I had conveyed by my discussion of their dependence on continued *Aliyah* and charitable contributions from fellow Jews abroad. Their autonomy within the context of the Ottoman system consisted in their right to govern themselves in religious and civil matters.

His second point, on the implication of my analysis of this arrangement for the legitimacy of Zionism, is simply irrelevant. As a Zionist, I am happy to find justification in history; but as a historian, I try to write my history "like it was." In any event, there does not seem to me to be anything in the record of the *millet* system and communal autonomy in the Ottoman empire that touches in the slightest on the "legitimacy of Zionism," which is a nationalist movement like other nationalist movements and derives its legitimacy from the needs and dignity of an oppressed people.

I am sorry to have disappointed C. Max Kortepeter, who writes that he has admired my scholarly work. His letter makes clear where his sympathies lie, and I am afraid that no evidence concerning historical facts will change his mind. It is not I who have raised the issue of the treatment of Jews in pre-Zionist Islam; it is Arab propagandists who have done so and who have chosen to use the myth as a political weapon. It is an elementary principle of law and fair play that he who raises an issue must be prepared for cross-examination. The facts are that Jews lived in precarious oppression in Muslim lands before the secular Zionism of the late 19th century existed, and that conditions in Palestine were in no way untypical of the larger experience. In that regard, I have the sense that Mr. Kortepeter never really read my article, which provides sufficient references to conditions in other parts of Islam to make clear the representativeness of the experience of what he calls the "small Jewish *Yishuv*."

As for what I will write in later chapters, I can only say that I will do my best there too to collect and present the evidence as I find it. I cannot promise more. And I would hope that Mr. Kortepeter will find it worth his effort to read my pages. One thing I shall be careful not to do is place apparent quotations in proximity to names so as to give a fallacious impression of authorship. Mr. Kortepeter is perfectly well aware that I never wrote the words that appear between quotation marks in his final paragraph. Yet he speaks of them as "the stereotypes of Mr. Landes," and an innocent reader would presumably infer that this is in fact what I said. If he is now prepared to demonstrate "the humility of the devout scholar of yore," he might begin with an apology to the readers of COMMENTARY.

Wagner and Pound

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

With regard to Samuel Lipman's "Wagner Comes to Broadway" [January] . . . : a quarter-century ago Peter Viereck wrote of two kinds of Wagnerians; those whom he called the "Gentle Wagnerians" and the "Tough Wagnerians." The former, Viereck pointed out, "loved Wagner as a pure musician"; while the latter "preached his proto-Nazism and anti-Semitism and . . . included Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler." At this point Viereck adds this significant warning: "In Wagner's day those who, like Nietzsche, prophetically feared Wagner's political influence were ridiculed: how could a 'crank artist' ever be a political 'danger'? Yet in the century that followed, Wagner's metapolitical credo became the main fountainhead of Hitler's ideology."

A bit strong, perhaps, but Viereck was employing the Wagner parallel to demonstrate that just as in Wagner's day there were "pure Wagnerians," in our own time there are those within (and without) the academy who persist in defending Ezra Pound for the "purity" of his verse. Surely it is easier to identify the sordid brutality—the appeal to *Schrecklichkeit*—in the poetry of Pound than it is to discover such themes in Wagner's music. Only one as learned in the subject as Samuel Lipman is able to match the words to the music of the German composer. Moreover, Mr. Lipman is on solid ground when he dismisses the Broadway production of *Meistersinger* in terms of a prophylactic puerility, demanding that if Wagner be done at all, he be done with all the harsh accents the performance (in text and inspiration) demands. . . .

But music is an abstract art, too subtle for the unsophisticated listener to get the message which Wagner spelled out in his writings, which include venomous attacks on the Jews. Poetry, of course, has its own subtlety, yet it is not ever so obscure as to make meaning absolutely unintelligible. In the works of Ezra Pound, it is true, the "meaning" is often obscured by vague allusions, an incredible intrusion of ancient and forgotten dialects, including some of the most flagrant abuses of Provençal, a language he knew as little as he did the other ancient tongues he abused. (Robert Graves has written with much intelligence on this aspect of the Poundian "paideums," while Gilbert Highet's hilarious parody of Pound's Provençalese remains a masterpiece of the genre.)

But Pound, be it said in his defense, did not want to be misunderstood, or to have his *magnum opus, The Cantos*, confined to the aesthetic blandishments of sycophants or sophomores. Nor did he savor the "purity" of Yeats or Eliot in approaching his masterpiece. What he wrote—he insisted—was an epic in which usury was defined as the supernal evil of this world on top (or bottom) of which stands the Jew, "disease incarnate." He brushed aside Yeats's aesthetic appreciation of the hidden linguistics in *The Cantos* as being so much eyewash, at the same time he told T. S. Eliot that he would never "achieve understanding" until he rid himself of the "Jewish poison."

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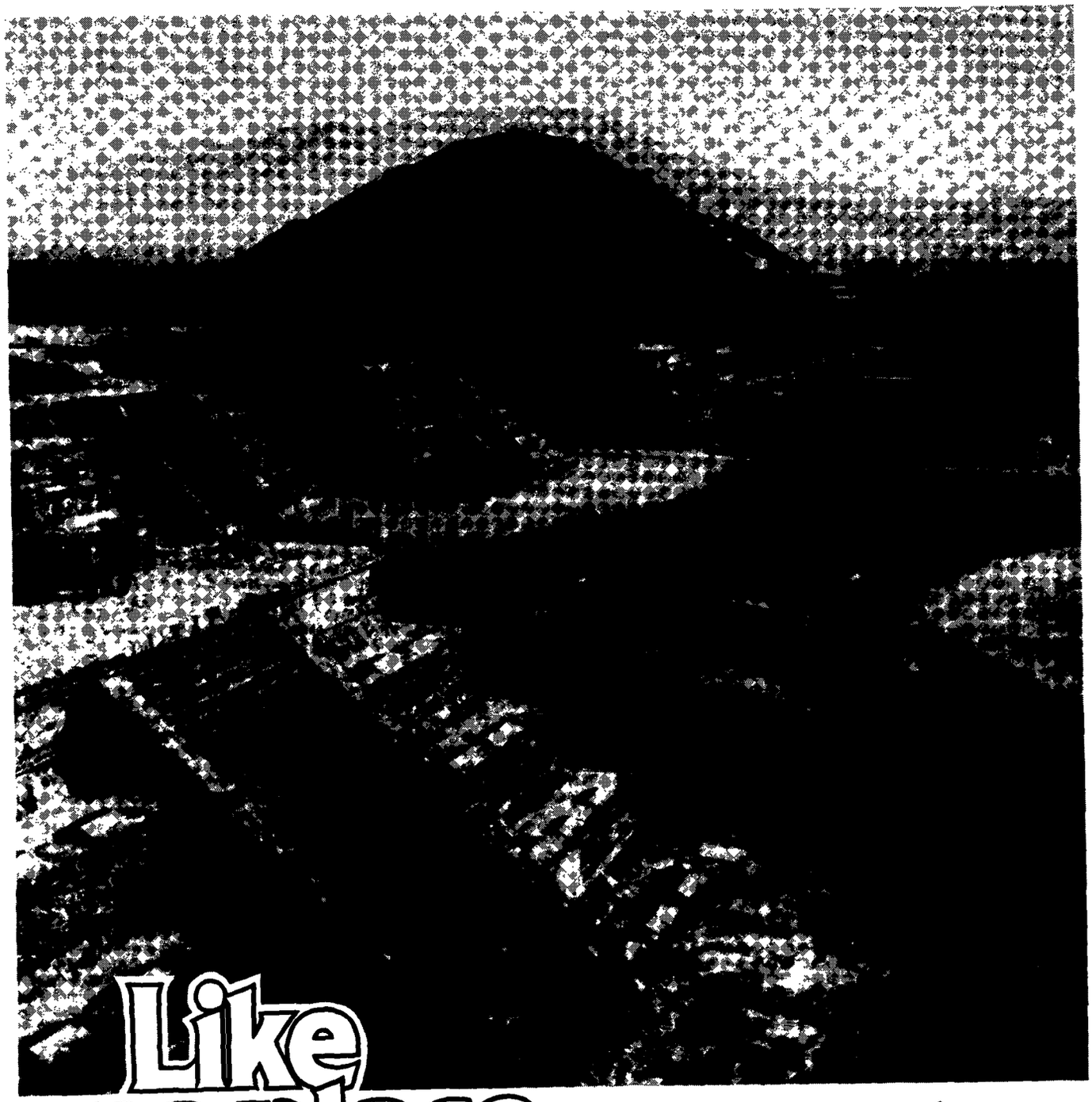

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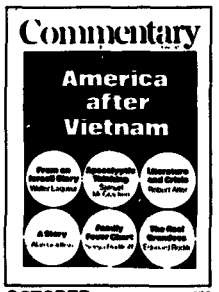

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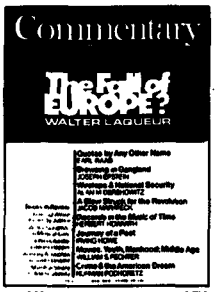

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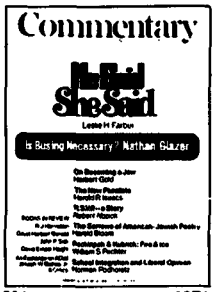

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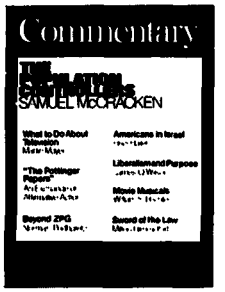

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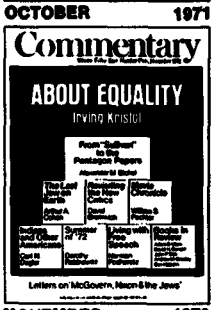

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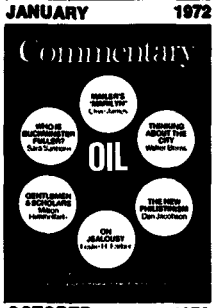

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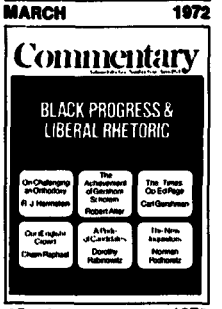

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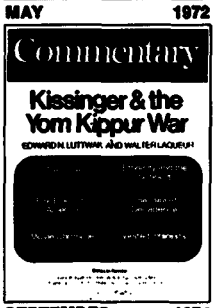

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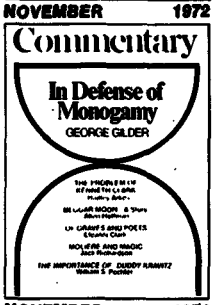

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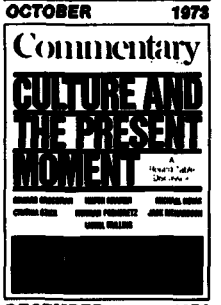

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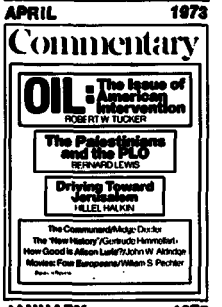

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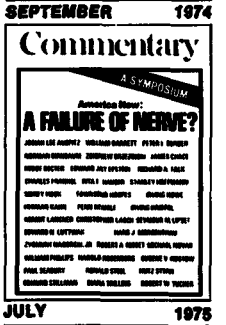

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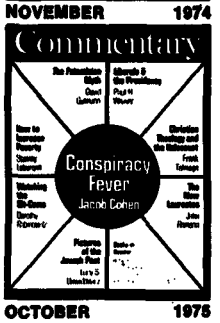

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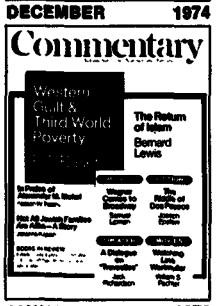

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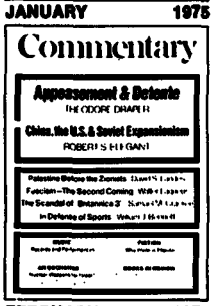

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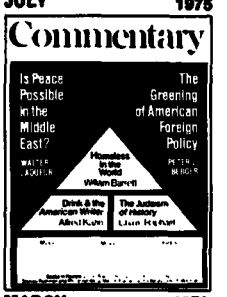
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Moreover, in his epic he wrote with unusual harshness of "yidds" and "kikes" and "usurers," always meaning those lower-case "jews" whose only purpose in life is to send nice, decent, peace-loving "goyim" to their death:

> the yidd is a stimulant, and the goyim are cattle
> in gt./proportion and go to saleable slaughter
> with the maximum of docility. . . .

Wagner would surely have loved to put these words (from the first of the over-prized *Pisan Cantos*) to music. In fact, the second of this series of canticles consists almost entirely of a musical score attributed to an obscure minnesinger. Pound loved music, Wagner loved anti-Semitic lyrics. In any case, Pound is *not without his coterie of adulators*, not only for the "purity" of his poetic talents, but even for his "toughness."

Wagner, it has been noted, served as intellectual *Wegweiser* for a future Great War in which Germany would triumph over all—*Deutschland über alles*—as the martial anthem has it. The kind of Gehenna Ezra Pound anticipated, and helped to articulate in verse and prose and via the spoken word over the Rome radio during World War II, was realized in the crematoria and gas chambers of the "perceptive" Hitler—"furious from perception," Pound called him in one of his Cantos. He *knew* what the "yidds" and the "kikes" had in store for the world unless they were dealt with firmly, forcefully, once and for all. And if Pound, toward the end of his life, vented his venom at democracy as something from which only the "kikery" benefited (see Canto 91)—"democracies electing their sewage/till there is no thought of holiness/a dung flow from 1913/ and, in this, their kikery functioned"—it remained for a well-entrenched academic in one of our most prestigious universities (Dartmouth) to hail Pound as a "civilizing force," at the same time Professor Hugh Kenner of Johns Hopkins University saw fit to single out Canto 52 as proving that Pound had in mind only "to decrease rather than to encourage anti-Semitism." As proof of this, I quote the following from the Canto, the "Ben" referred to being Benjamin Franklin:

> Remarked Ben: better keep
> out the jews

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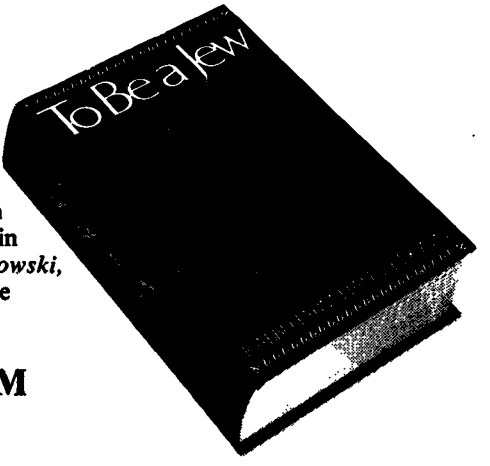

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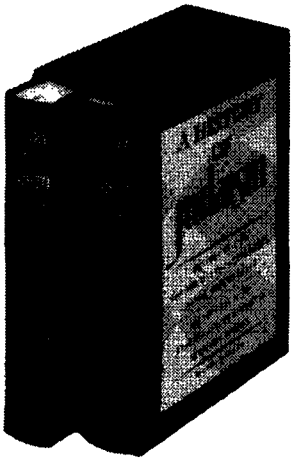

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or yr/grand children will curse you. . . .

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Islam

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Bernard Lewis, in "The Return of Islam" [January], did not refer to the Islamic Conference of 44 nations, which was admitted to the UN last November with observer status. . . .

Founded in Rabat in 1969 . . . the Islamic Conference, which operates a secretariat in Jidda, has been the prime mover in getting the UN to declare Zionism a racist doctrine. It took the Conference five years to accomplish this goal, which was first proclaimed at the Second Islamic Conference held in Jidda in 1970, when the Islamic nations decided to move politically against Israel.

In Lahore, Pakistan, in 1974, four months after imposition of the oil embargo, the Islamic Conference voted to work toward the goal of a new international economic order. Spurred by a proposal made by Algerian President Houari Boumédienne, the Islamic Conference was the first Third World organization to back such a proposal. The Conference supported Boumédienne in calling for the convening of a Sixth Special Session of the UN, a session which was held eight months later. . . .

Although the Conference does not vote as a unit in the UN because many Islamic countries have conflicting allegiances (such as to the non-aligned bloc), nevertheless the Conference has played and will continue to play a vital role in joint Islamic activities. An Islamic Development Bank, an Islamic News Agency, and a program of Islamic cultural presentations have already been established. . . . In the future, as the oil money provides the financing, the Islamic Conference will become ever more important.

JAMES J. NOVAK
State College, Pennsylvania

The French Revolution

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Carl Gershman's review of *The Fascist Persuasion in Radical Politics* by A. James Gregor [Books in Review, January] is admirable. I would add only that Gregor could have found well defined traits of fascism and Bolshevism not only in the crisis of classical Marxism but also as a strong current in the French Revolution. In particular, Jean-Marie Collot d'Herbois, an

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The Arabs and Zionism Before World War I

Neville J. Mandel

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actor, and Joseph Fouché, a professor of Latin, were spiritual ancestors (more so than the simple-minded Hébertistes) of the tendency Mr. Gershman describes so well. Together they were delegated by the Committee of Public Safety to direct the Terror in Lyons. In about three months they supervised the execution of 1,667 persons—about as many as were killed later between the executions of Danton and Robespierre, when the Terror in Paris was at its height. Collot, finally persuaded that the workers of Lyons would never be sufficiently revolutionary, proposed to the Committee that all 60,000 of them should be forcibly dispersed throughout France.

Albert Mathiez, a sympathetic French historian, had this to say of an earlier performance by Fouché: "Fouché was one of those who believed that the revolution could be saved only by an energetic class policy applied for the benefit of the *sans-culottes*. By an ordinance of September 19 he established in the chief town of every district in the department of Nievre a committee of surveillance and philanthropy. . . . On September 26 he issued orders to the bakers at Moulins that they were in the future to make only one kind of bread, known as 'bread of equality.' . . . Having abolished poverty, he prohibited begging and idleness by an ordinance of 24 Brumaire, saying 'all beggars or idle persons shall be imprisoned.' " . . .

PAUL R. PORTER
Reston, Virginia

1947-48

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The refusal of Gary V. Smith [Letters from Readers, March, in a discussion of David Gutmann's "The Palestinian Myth," October 1975] to place the blame and ultimate responsibility for Arab flight from Palestine during 1947-48 squarely on the divided and corrupt Arab leadership itself should be held up to scrutiny in the light of what the world has witnessed during the last ten months of civil war in Lebanon. Mass atrocities, mutilations, indiscriminate killing, blackmail, arson, looting, and mass flight were and remain the norm in inter-Arab conflicts. The Arab civil population of Haifa and Jaffa realized long before April 1948 that their lives and property were in jeopardy from the poorly disciplined, irregular, and corrupt Arab forces as much as from the prospect of a Jewish military victory.

Dr. Herbert Pritzke was an escaped German prisoner of war who served as Chief Medical Officer for the Arab forces in Jaffa. His eyewitness account, *Bedouin Doctor* (Dutton, 1957) is the objective reporting of a foreign volunteer:

> There was no discipline, no military police, no muster rolls, no list of personnel. No one ever knew who belonged to which unit or where the different units were. This incurable disorder was shamelessly exploited.
>
> Things happened as they were bound to happen under such leadership. By the end of April, the Jaffa front was completely disintegrated. The town was almost deserted. Less than a tenth of the 80,000 inhabitants remained in their homes, and even this remnant was trying by all means possible to get out of the town. Fear of their own bullying and cruel compatriots spurred them to leave home and property, not less than the imminent occupation of the town by the Jewish besiegers. Moreover, bandits, more dangerous than the occupying force, were roaming through the town singly and in groups robbing and murdering.
>
> It was clear that the depopulated and demoralized town must soon be overrun by the Jews. We Germans, who met almost daily in my room in the hospital, found ourselves in a very precarious situation. As representatives of law and order, we could to some extent check the depredations of the bandits and looters, which did not make us popular with them. At the same time, we felt that we were hated by the embittered citizens because we could not save their town. If we managed to survive the final chaos, we could look forward to no prospect of future but captivity. The Arabs themselves no longer showed any keenness to fight for their country.

Dr. Pritzke makes no mention whatsoever regarding Deir Yassin but bears out the remarks of David Gutmann that from the beginning "it was a dirty, nasty little war fought at close quarters by intertwined populations" and that at the outset of the war the Arab side possessed a clear superiority in firepower.

NORMAN BERDICHEVSKY
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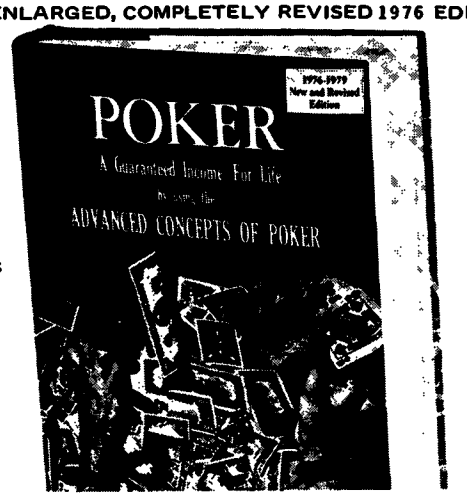

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Why New York Went Broke

James Ring Adams

"THE commonest mistake of Europeans who talk about America," said Lord Bryce in 1888, "is to assume that the political vices of New York are found everywhere. The next most common is to suppose that they are found nowhere else." Today the same mistakes are once again being made, not by Europeans but by Americans, and they have imparted an atmosphere of vagueness and irrelevancy to the ongoing national debate on "bailing out" New York City. Unable to sort out the purely local and even technical aspects of New York's fiscal crisis from its more general or national overtones, the oracles of the Left and Right have also experienced a certain difficulty in fitting the problem into their usual schemata. Even the participants have failed to resolve the issue of whether New York's problems are a local matter or whether they are national in origin. Thus, although nearly everyone considers the New York City crisis to be enormously significant, almost no one can say with confidence just what it signifies.

Those who see the crisis as national in origin claim that New York is a victim of the national economy. Until recently, they point out, the city suffered from an inflation rate greater than the national average. (Toward the end of 1975, the situation reversed, and New York's cost of living actually rose less than the national one.) The national recessions of 1970 and 1974 also hit New York with unusual severity; in fact, the city never shared in the national economic recovery after 1970. As a major importer of OPEC-produced oil (primarily from Venezuela), the city took the brunt of the OPEC-dictated quadrupling of fuel costs in 1973. The blow fell especially heavily on Consolidated Edison bills and apartment-house operating costs, where it produced a genuine crisis in the city's real-estate economy. Even the arcane operations of the Federal Reserve Board played a significant role: the City Comptroller, who conducts municipal borrowing, complained that some of his difficulty in early 1975 grew out of the federal "tight-money" policy, involving a sharp reduction in the money supply and hence funds available for loans.

Yet these arguments are far too broad to account for the highly specific circumstances of the city's economic decline. Even the money-supply contraction, by far the most plausible of the "national" explanations, acted primarily as a trigger of the crisis, not as a cause, and the actual sequence of events reads like a Rube Goldberg cartoon. Charts of the monthly money supply show a precipitous drop in December 1974. This sudden contraction boosted city interest rates, but its principal victim was a financially troubled New York State construction agency, the notorious Urban Development Corporation. Denied new credit, the UDC was unable to pay off some $135 million of debts coming due in mid-February. The shock of this event, the largest governmental default since the Great Depression, and the fear of investor lawsuits, made bank underwriters turn a sharp eye on city fiscal practices they had overlooked for a decade. In late February, a young lawyer representing Bankers Trust noticed that a sale of $260 million in Tax Anticipation Notes, which are supposed to be issued against taxes scheduled to be collected, was in fact being based on taxes which had already been received and spent. The note sale was cancelled in the face of demands for more information, and the fiscal crisis was under way. But if the city had been economically healthy and fiscally sound, it would not have had to overextend its borrowing in the first place, and it could have competed successfully for loans in a tight-money market. It must be asked why, as the '70 and '74 recessions so emphatically revealed, the city was not economically healthy.

DURING two previous recessions, in 1957-58 and 1960-61, New York suffered the loss of fewer jobs than the rest of the country. But in the recession of 1969, New York lost jobs at three times the national average, and things continued to get worse in the next few years as the rest of the country recovered. In the severe recession which lasted from November 1973 to September 1975, New York City's job loss accelerated to a rate six times the national average. In 1968, the city's unemployment rate had been one-half of a percentage point *below* the national average, placing it second lowest in a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey of fourteen major cities. In September 1975, New York City unemployment had

JAMES RING ADAMS is on the staff of the *Wall Street Journal* and has previously contributed several reviews to these pages.

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reached 11.1 per cent, some 2.3 percentage points above the national rate, giving it the second highest rate among the same fourteen cities.

The turnaround is dramatic and cannot be explained simply as a sign of urban decay. Older industrial cities like Baltimore, Chicago, and St. Louis all improved their standing against New York in the unemployment survey. Indeed, the apparent suddenness of this reversal can be attributed precisely to the fact that New York was *not* decaying in the 60's, at least not on the surface. The borough of Manhattan was in the midst of what one observer called "the greatest building boom in the history of mankind." The real-property tax base grew by about a third, almost all from new construction. From 1959 to 1969, local employment even increased by 279,000 jobs.

Under the surface, however, the city's economic structure was shifting in a potentially vitiating direction. Since 1950, when the American Safety Razor Corporation moved from downtown Brooklyn to Staunton, Virginia, manufacturing industries have been pulling out of New York at a steadily accelerating rate. The garment industry along Seventh Avenue was shipping its cut cloth to the small towns around Allentown, Pennsylvania for sewing. The large bakeries and food processors were fleeing the industrial reaches of Queens and Brooklyn, leaving acre after acre of empty warehouses in their place. Even the breweries left. The loss of nearly 140,000 manufacturing jobs in the decade up to 1969 was more than matched in the next five years. By 1975 fewer than one out of every four working New Yorkers was in the business of producing goods.

During the 60's, New Yorkers managed to overlook this decline not only because of the building boom but also because of a boom in the "service-producing" sector. Nearly 200,000 new service jobs came into being from 1960 to the peak year of 1970, and local and state government added another 150,000. This shift gave the appearance of paralleling the national growth of the service sector, but in New York there were two differences: first, while the old, declining industries moved away, the new industries, based on automated technology, developed somewhere else; and second, a high proportion of New York's gains in employment depended on government money. The largest single growth industry in New York City after 1960 was the municipal government, and after 1969, the single largest increase in jobs, in absolute numbers, came in "medical and other health services" financed by Medicare and Medicaid.

The growing importance of government employment produced an obvious paradox and a vicious cycle. To pay more city workers, more taxes had to be levied. But though one city job might replace one factory job (or salesman's job, and so forth), in terms of numbers employed, it fell far short of making the same contribution to the tax base.* Consequently, to support the increased government spending, taxes had to be increased even further. But taxes can be raised only so far; at a certain point, they begin to depress the economy and drive away private businesses. This tax pressure on private business was aggravated by a nightmarish array of permit and inspection fees, pervasive regulations, and the general impression that the city bureaucracy was hostile to the private sector. By the time the city realized that it had reached the point at which private business no longer found it comfortable to remain, its economy had contracted so sharply that even government employment was unable to compensate for the resulting loss of jobs. By the end of 1975, the city's overall economy had shrunk by a total of more than 510,000 jobs, a decrease larger than the entire working population of Detroit.

Just as the city's own tax policies and anti-business attitudes were more important than national factors in crippling its economy, so were its own budgetary policies responsible for the fiscal crisis. The fiscal crisis derived primarily from the refusal of investors to lend the city money, and investors refused their aid because the city had gone for a decade without bringing its budget into line with economic reality. Thus, for example, while Buffalo was reducing its city work force by 16 per cent in response to a declining economic base, New York responded to the same condition by putting an additional 50,000 people on the city payroll.

The crucial question is why New York failed to adjust. Why did it allow its budget to increase by nearly 15 per cent a year when tax revenues could support only a growth of 5 per cent? Why did the city respond to a leveling off in corporate and personal tax payments by raising the tax rates?

The city has answered by citing the famous postwar migration, or rather series of migrations, which brought large numbers of Southern blacks, Puerto Ricans, and others of Hispanic origin to the assortment of "ghettos," "*barrios*," and little Ecuadors of Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the south Bronx. In the most widely accepted version of the numbers, some two million middle-class whites have left New York since World War II and have been replaced by two million impoverished blacks and Puerto Ricans. New Yorkers will state as an unshakable article of faith that the city's budget could not be reduced because of its obligation to care for these poor, that it accepted this burden to a degree not paralleled elsewhere, and that in doing so it performed a service for the rest of the country.

The trouble with this argument is that it rests on a racist fallacy. Although the changing racial

* According to one study, to equal the taxes raised on one manufacturing job requires the creation of 1.6 government jobs, making that category the least efficient replacement in the survey.

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composition of the city is undeniable, and although many blacks and Puerto Ricans were probably poor when they arrived in New York, it by no means follows that the city has more poor people now than it had ten or twenty years ago. If, as so many believe, New York's poverty population has increased by two million people, *where are they*? The 1970 census found that, even in constant dollars (thus correcting for inflation), the proportion of low-income families remained *unchanged* from 1959 to 1969. Furthermore, studies using the Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys have concluded that in the decade of the 50's, when the new migration reached its peak, the number of poor in the city declined sharply, and the number of well-off increased. Thus, as of 1970, New York City had about the same proportion of poor as the rest of the country, and a slightly larger proportion in the higher brackets (over $15,000).

It is true that this steady rise in the city's median income began to be reversed after 1970. From a high in that year of $10,951 (in 1972 dollars), it fell by 8.3 per cent to $10,039 in 1972. The lower end of the scale, those earning less than $5,000, grew by 3.2 percentage points. Non-white families suffered especially large reverses; for them, the lowest bracket increased from 19.8 per cent in 1970 to 29 per cent in 1972. (Those non-whites earning over $15,000 escaped relatively unscathed, however, remaining at close to 15 per cent. The proportion of whites in this bracket, by the way, shrank somewhat.) But this backward slide cannot be blamed on the migrations, which had already leveled off by then; it was caused by the 1969-70 recession and its aftermath.

It is also true that over the past twenty-five years New York has lost its favored position in the national economy. In 1959, the city's median family income was nearly 8 per cent higher than that of the entire country, and its proportion of the poor was only two-thirds of the national figure. In the next decade, the national income almost caught up to the city's, and the national share of poverty fell slightly below New York's. But it takes a curious logic to blame this shift entirely or even primarily on the city's changing racial composition. Given the operation of strictly economic factors, it seems highly doubtful that New York would have continued to be that much richer than the rest of America even if everybody who lived in the city in 1950 had stayed put.

The fact is that when the poor and uneducated blacks and Puerto Ricans came to New York, substantial numbers got jobs and went to school. Like the English, Germans, Irish, Jews, and Italians before them, they came to New York to move up in the world, and by and large, by 1970, they had succeeded. Indeed, during the 60's, blacks moved into the upper-income brackets (over $15,000) at a faster rate than whites (although whites obviously started from a higher base and in terms of overall income distribution were still way ahead). These figures reveal a remarkable accomplishment, both for the black and Puerto Rican population and for New York City itself. That this accomplishment is so steadfastly overlooked, that the city's leaders remain blind to the upward mobility of its "minorities," and that the exodus of middle-class whites should be regarded as in itself a calamity—all this bears witness to the persistence of a sort of liberal racism.

New York officials complain of yet another demographic phenomenon, the recent wave of illegal immigration, of aliens, predominantly from South and Central America, who have settled more or less permanently without benefit of permission from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

For obvious reasons, no one can really tell how many illegal aliens live in New York City; estimates range from 100,000 to a grossly exaggerated one million (the guess of the district INS office). Even if the truth lies in the middle, this new population has become a significant element of the city's life and economy. New York is now a major outpost of Caribbean and South American culture. Spanish has reached quasi-official standing as the second language in education and subway announcements, and the Current Population Survey reports that "Hispanics other than Puerto Rican" is one of the most rapidly increasing groups in the city.

According to the city, this new population has placed yet another special burden on municipal services, and added to the city's inability to bring its budget into line. It is an open question, however, whether the illegal immigrant is a burden to the city or a help. The principal economic influence on the alien is his illegal status. In this situation, he is hardly likely to apply for welfare or any city service that would put his name on a list. He may even evade the census count. Such a furtive population, furthermore, is ripe for exploitation. Hard evidence is sparse, but one hears plausible reports that the existence of "illegals" (including Eastern Hemisphere populations like the Chinese) has led to a revival of the garment-industry sweat shop in lofts throughout lower Manhattan and south Brooklyn. The City Comptroller's office supports this impression. One of its duties is to enforce a law that contractors with the city pay their workers the wage rates prevailing in the industry. Some 20 per cent of the Comptroller's spot audits turned up illegal aliens; these may be paid as little as one-third of the legal minimum. In one instance, the aliens were paid in checks which later bounced, and if they complained, the employer threatened to report them to the INS. Variations of this pattern in the general economy may affect tens of thousands of the illegals.

In such cases, certainly, the economic benefits of this immigration are being reaped by unscrupu-

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lous employers. One could argue that the immigrants are an economic burden to the city in that they depress wage levels or that they take up jobs that might be available to unemployed citizens. But one could equally well argue that they are doing work, as domestics or busboys in restaurants, which citizens nowadays are reluctant to accept and that, as underpaid painters for example, they may be providing the break in costs which allows a marginal business to survive. In either case, far from being a burden to the city, they may well be playing a crucial role in keeping alive large sectors of the city's economy.

Of course, the general impression is that the migrants, whether black and Puerto Rican American citizens or illegal aliens, are a burden because of welfare. Yet the illegals do not go on welfare (even if they could, most descriptions of them concur that they are young, ambitious men and women who make good workers), while a Census Bureau study of six Northern cities, including New York, has shown that recent black migrants from the South are *less* likely to go on welfare than blacks born and raised locally.

It is nevertheless a fact that only as New York's racial and ethnic composition changed did the "welfare problem" emerge. Since 1961, the public-assistance rolls have come close to tripling. They now include nearly one million New Yorkers (or, since most of the recipients are children, some 250,000 families). About 85 per cent of them are black and Hispanic, but contrary to widespread opinion, few are new arrivals seeking higher welfare payments, and there is evidence to show that those who participated in the postwar migrations only went on welfare after failing to find the jobs they had come to New York to seek. Are *they* the the cause of New York's crisis?

That they are a burden cannot be denied. In addition to the cost the city incurs in helping to support them, New York must live and deal with the special problems to which children raised on welfare seem to be prone—an unusually high degree of delinquency, failure in school, and emotional disorder. And the fact that welfare families spend, but do not produce, has contributed to the city's high rate of inflation. Yet even when all this is acknowledged, even when it is granted that New York, simply because of its size, has the nation's largest welfare population in absolute numbers, it still cannot be concluded that welfare caused the margin of bankruptcy. For New York simply does not have a bigger welfare problem than most large American cities.

Indeed, in terms of proportions, and hence of the relative impact of the "culture of poverty," New York has been in better shape than nine other major American cities. According to a federal survey in February 1975, AFDC recipients (including children) make up 10.9 per cent of New York City's population, but they constitute 12.6 per cent in Newark, 13.9 per cent in Philadelphia, 14.5 per cent in Baltimore, and 15.8 per cent in St. Louis. These rankings remain the same when the other, less destructive categories of public assistance are counted.

The city retorts that, even though the indirect costs may be lower than elsewhere, welfare still constitutes a uniquely high charge on New York's municipal budget. The trend nationally has been for local jurisdictions to transfer their welfare costs and administration to the state. In the last three or four years, Boston, Chicago, and Baltimore have been able to do this, but New York has not. This is true, and yet it is also misleading, since the direct cost of welfare to New York is much lower than the public has been given to understand. Although the total cost of social services (excluding Medicaid) in last year's budget ran to $2.4 billion, for example, more than 70 per cent was reimbursed, so that the direct charge to the city, including administration, was only about $600 million (one-third the cost of servicing the city's debt). Of this sum, only about $250 million actually went to the people on welfare themselves.

IN SHORT, the external conditions making life difficult for New York—the declining national economy, the black and Puerto Rican migration, the illegal immigrants, and the increase in the welfare rolls—cannot be blamed for the city's bankruptcy. Many other cities suffer similar problems—Buffalo, with its truly contracting economy and higher tax-delinquency rate; Boston and Detroit, with their much greater unemployment rates; Baltimore and St. Louis, with their higher proportion of welfare families—and yet they remain solvent. New York City's bankruptcy is the outcome of its own political behavior.

The main element of this behavior is the city's attempt to subsidize, not merely the poor, but substantial portions of the middle class as well. Of course, many social programs which claim to serve the poor wind up with this result, in that most of their budgets seem to go for the high salaries of their administrators. But New York subsidizes the middle class in other ways as well.

There is, for instance, the policy of free tuition in the City University system (CUNY) which costs the city $175 million in potential revenue and which, as it presently works, benefits the middle class much more than the poor. According to the State Education Commissioner, if the system imposed tuition at the state university's level of $650 to $800 a year, its low-income students—those from families earning $11,000 a year or less—would be fully covered by state and federal aid. The only students who would pay full tuition would be those (comprising about 20 per cent of the student body) whose families earned a taxable income of more than $20,000 a year.

An even more vivid example is provided by New York State's peculiar Mitchell-Lama housing

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program, an absolutely unabashed middle-income subsidy which the city has embraced enthusiastically. Under this program, named for the state legislators who sponsored it, the state's agencies and New York City raise money by selling tax-exempt bonds to set up a fund for middle-income housing projects. The public body makes mortgage loans from this fund to "limited-profit housing companies." Since tax-exempt bonds used to be one of the cheapest ways to raise money, the state or city could in theory make its mortgage loans available at bargain rates. And because interest on mortgages is one of the largest elements in the cost of running an apartment house, the "limited-profit housing companies" were enabled to provide rents at unusually low rates for middle-income residents. This bargain, plus the tax abatement also included in the legislation, can work out to a subsidy of nearly $150 a month on the cost of an apartment.

This subsidy, unfortunately, was too well hidden in the mechanics of financing for its ultimate beneficiaries to appreciate their good fortune. Thus when other costs, such as fuel and maintenance, began to rise, and rents had to increase to cover them, many tenants refused to pay. The result has been to plunge 90 of the city's 130 Mitchell-Lama projects into arrears on their mortgage payments. The city needs this money to pay off its housing bonds and notes. As the supposedly self-supporting housing program is unable to meet its obligations, the city budget must do so—to the tune of a minimum of $45 million a year.

Free tuition and Mitchell-Lama alone add up to the same general dimension as the city's share of AFDC payments (minus administrative costs). But there is also the even greater effect of the city's rent-control and stabilization program, a remnant of World War II which confers its greatest benefits on those middle- and upper-income families who have lived in the same apartment since that time. It has been estimated that this program has lowered the city's real-estate tax revenue by several hundred million dollars a year; controls have also contributed substantially to rising tax delinquency and abandonment.

But the most massive of the middle-class subsidies are the highly advantageous salaries and fringe benefits paid to city employees. It has often been said that New York is in fiscal trouble because it bought peace during the turbulent years of the 60's. This statement is true, but not in the sense in which it is generally intended—that the city bought peace for the middle class from the poor blacks and Puerto Ricans by means of welfare and social programs. In fact, the city did buy peace, but it bought peace for one section of the middle class—the riders of subways, for instance—from another section of the middle class—the public employees—and the price it paid was inflated contract settlements.

It is true, as defenders of these settlements have argued, that New York City has a higher cost of living than most urban areas; that the focus on the high salaries of the uniformed services has obscured the much lower pay scales for many categories of city worker; and that for teachers, police, and firemen, the average salaries as measured by the Bureau of the Census are not that far out of line with those paid in other large cities. These arguments, however, fail to make the comparison with pay scales in the private sector in New York, which in many cases will show that city workers advance in salary more rapidly and enjoy greater fringe benefits and pensions than their counterparts in industry. Furthermore, the frequently cited census study on municipal salaries contains a major catch. The Census Bureau did not attempt to measure fringe benefits and pensions, and it was precisely in these areas that the city concentrated its pay-offs. The city did this because Mayor Lindsay, in whose administration these pay-offs reached their peak, wanted to hide how much he was giving away and to defer the costs until the end of his term of office. His budget officials deliberately held down the annual level of pension contributions by several extremely questionable decisions. The result has been severe underfunding in all five city pension funds. If this deficiency is taken into account, the appropriation for pensions in next year's budget will probably *exceed* the level of just five years ago by almost one billion dollars.

Not only have pay scales, fringe benefits, and pensions thus risen astronomically; there has also been a massive expansion of the municipal workforce. At the end of the last budget year, the generally accepted size of the city payroll was 340,000, the same size as the West German army. (The Bureau of Labor Statistics, which counts the independent corporations like the MTA and the Port Authority which City Hall conveniently omits from its own calculations, put the number employed in local government at more than 420,000.) The growth since 1959 is variously calculated at 100,000 to 150,000. Personnel costs now consume about 60 per cent of the city's own revenue sources.

One reason for this extraordinarily large workforce is the fact that New York provides a broader range of services than any other city in the country. Municipal officials have emphasized that New York's budget includes a range of enterprises—such as welfare, primary and secondary education, and sanitation—which elsewhere are handled by counties, school districts, or sewer boards. New York also pays for expensive facilities like the City University system, a number of prisons, and a network of courts that are usually the business of the state. And it runs some enterprises, like a system of municipal hospitals and municipal radio and television stations, that other localities simply cannot afford. Mayor Robert Wagner, who was succeeded by Lindsay in 1965, once said that the city

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should provide all the services that private enterprise would not. Since the main reason private enterprise won't do something is that it loses money, this attitude in itself guaranteed a certain drain on the budget.

The problem was compounded during the Great Society years by the city's uncritical acceptance of all the matching-grant, social-welfare programs produced by Washington. Mayor Lindsay made it a matter of policy to secure as large a federal and state contribution to his budget as he could. Because he expressed this policy in self-righteous jeremiads about Washington's failure to help the cities, the public overlooked the fact that he succeeded to a remarkable extent. In fiscal 1963, the federal government contributed $166 million to the city budget; in fiscal '75, it contributed $2.7 billion, or more than 20 per cent of the total. When federal support for many categorical-grant programs was curtailed with the introduction of revenue-sharing bloc grants, Mayor Lindsay, who had originally supported revenue sharing, faced the choice of reducing the programs which depended on categorical federal aid, or making up the difference out of local revenue. In many cases, he chose the latter course.

Any one of these local policies could have pushed the budget into the red; together they made a crisis inevitable. The wonder of the situation is that the city managed to defer the crisis for as long as it did. Yet the means of deferral became in the end the cause of an even larger calamity. It was not merely a budget deficit but a complete collapse of credit, a *de facto* bankruptcy, which caused the fiscal crisis through which New York has suffered for the last thirteen months. And New York's credit collapsed because the financial community could no longer turn a blind eye to the amazing variety of shifts, tricks, and "creative accounting" that allowed the city to hide its steadily accumulating deficits.

The general strategy was simple. Living beyond its means, the city had to borrow. It sold bonds until it reached its constitutional debt limit. Then it sold short-term notes that it could retire only by selling new notes. It established independent corporations for various city functions so that they could borrow too. At the end it was driven to establishing a corporation whose only function was to borrow.

The banks had been willing enough to sell these notes and bonds in an inflationary market, but in the crunch of last winter and spring, they suddenly discovered that much of this paper had nothing to back it up. Not to put too fine a point on it, the city had engaged in practices that the laws which govern private enterprise consider to be fraud. When state auditors started going through the books, they found that the hidden deficit amounted to $2.5 billion and the fraudulently issued notes totalled at least $500 million. The problem was not simply a one-year deficit or a temporary tightness in the economy; it was the collapse of a Ponzi scheme that had been going on for ten years.

THE true causes of New York's crisis, then, were not the national economy, the black and Puerto Rican migrations, illegal aliens, or welfare; they were to be found in decisions made locally by elected local officials. But why were these decisions made? Why did elected officials feel obligated both to subsidize the middle class and to multiply social services to the poor? Why did they grant municipal labor unions such lucrative contracts while at the same time expanding the work force? Why did they insist on living beyond their means?

The answer is political. Budget crises are political crises, and the disarray in New York's finances reflects its political fragmentation. The roots of the crisis can be traced at least as far back as Mayor Wagner; his last administration produced the phrase, "A good loan is better than a bad tax." And much of the immediate trouble was intensified by the vacillation of Mayor Abraham Beame. But it was during the administration of John Lindsay that the crisis really developed. Mr. Lindsay no doubt assumed his office with good intentions. He attacked the loose fiscal practices of his predecessor and, in fact, made some useful reforms. But like Mayor Beame after him, he very quickly found himself reverting to the bad habits of his predecessor. In Lindsay's case, one cause of this apostasy became apparent on literally his first day in office. At 5:00 A.M., January 1, 1966, the Transit Workers Union went out on strike. In hindsight, the confrontation was an amazingly apt symbol of the inability of the upper-income WASP Republican Mayor to adjust to the city's lower-middle-class, labor-Democratic ethos. Unable by background and temperament to enter into the backroom political rapport that had eased Wagner's dealings with the unions, and unwilling as a Republican to seem timid in the face of organized labor (as late as 1968, indeed, much of Lindsay's popularity with Midwest Republicans could be attributed to his reputation as "the man who stood up to the unions"), he chose to fight. There was a strike, and to settle it Lindsay wound up paying more than Wagner ever had or would. The pattern was set whereby Lindsay regularly bought off the unions with concessions that startled even the union leaders themselves.

On this issue, it appears, the problem was that the unions were no longer part of the coalition that controlled City Hall. At first glance, this observation leads to a startling conclusion, that city government would be cheaper and more efficient in the hands of an old-fashioned machine. New York, one could argue, might have been spared a great deal of expense if it had been run by a disciplined political establishment that included its

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work force, in effect compensating its employees with political prestige and power instead of money. (The partial restoration of this pattern under Mayor Beame and MAC may explain the relative willingness of municipal labor leaders today to cooperate in austerity measures.)

But if in one sense New York under Lindsay suffered from the absence of a machine-imposed consensus, in another sense it suffered from an effort to build just such a machine again. The parallel that suggests itself here—as Professor Jack D. Douglas of the University of California has pointed out—is between John Lindsay and William Marcy Tweed. No one, of course, has ever accused Lindsay of venality or political corruption, whereas Boss Tweed and his people stole somewhere between $50 million and $200 million of the city's money. But besides enriching himself and his "ring," Tweed was also building a new constituency for a previously weak Democratic party, and he did this by expanding municipal employment to create patronage for the city's immigrant population, and by financing the expansion through the public debt. As a Republican in a Democratic city, Lindsay similarly entered office with a weak natural constituency, and he spent the next eight years trying to build a new one of his own. His targets were not simply, as his rhetoric suggested, the poor and oppressed, but the social-welfare complex that grew up during the War on Poverty. The Great Society, with all its matching grants and new municipal services, provided an essential element. By aggressively adopting all the new programs, Lindsay created new jobs which he could fill with his own people. Hence the expanding payroll, the broadening range of city programs, and the unchecked growth of the budget. Hence also Lindsay's inability to cut back when times changed and the Nixon administration began to limit matching grants. And hence, in the end, the collapse.

One wonders finally how, in spite of the political stakes, Boss Tweed in the 19th century or John Lindsay in the 20th thought they could get away with the fiscal manipulations necessary to finance their work. Perhaps they were following the spirit of the dictum of John Maynard Keynes, "In the long run, we are all dead." But in the long run, our descendants must settle our debts, and historians will settle our reputations.

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Democracy and European Communism

Hadley Arkes

BRINGING the Communist parties of Italy and France into their respective governments is apparently one of those ideas "whose time has come." In France, a coalition of the Socialists and Communists, ranged behind the Socialist leader, François Mitterand, came within a percentage point of winning the presidential election in 1974. Some recent polls suggest that if the election were held today, the coalition of the Left might win slightly more than a majority of the vote. In Italy, the debility of successive governments and the strains within the ruling Christian Democratic party have been enough to highlight, through indirection, that available "presence" which the Communist party has managed over the years to cultivate. In contrast to the Christian Democrats, the Communists seem to stand forth now with a sense of cohesion and discipline—and with the signs of a certain success that is building firmly in momentum. The party made impressive gains last summer in elections at the regional and local level, when it won control of the administration in two important regions in the north and received more than a third of the aggregate vote in the nation. More recent surveys suggest that the Communists would win about the same portion of the vote in national elections. If those findings held true, the Communists would be quickly approaching the point where they could mount a challenge to the hegemony of the Christian Democrats or insist even more forcefully than they have since 1973 that the present state of affairs in Italian politics would justify a grand coalition.

As a result of the divisions within the Christian Democratic party, the government has often needed Communist votes in the past few years in order to pass its measures. If it came down to a case of restraining the unions—or of seeking to impose any firm measure in public policy—even some conservative observers, such as Ernest van den Haag, have begun to wonder whether it would be possible to govern at all in Italy without the participation of the Communists.* In a rare turn of affairs, van den Haag happens to coincide this time with the conclusions reached by many other commentators writing in prominent journals of opinion. At the same time, a number of books have recently appeared on the subject of Communism in Western Europe, and they tend to suggest, through the very fact of their appearance, that the Communist parties deserve to be treated, in effect, as legitimate parts of the political order and legitimate claimants, then, to a role in government.

That perspective would probably be shared by almost all of the authors who find a place in two of the more notable recent books: *The Communist Parties of Western Europe* by Neil McInnes† and *Communism in Italy and France*, edited by Donald Blackmer and Sidney Tarrow.** (The latter volume is a collection of papers that were presented at a conference at MIT in 1972, and which have been touched up here and there to bring them up to date.) In one way or another, both of these books seek to render some account of the changes that have occurred in the Communist parties in the West. The authors are uniformly indisposed to conceal from themselves the Leninist character (or the stringent hierarchical authority) of the Communist parties, and yet there is, at the same time, a tendency to back away from the most decisive question: Have the Communist parties of Italy and France actually incorporated now in their own characters the principles of constitutional government? It is that which we must know more than anything else before we can say whether the Communists would be acceptable finally as partners in a democratic government.

On that point the evidence in these volumes is far from satisfying (as indeed most of the authors have recognized). Ronald Tiersky reflects the problem rather well when he observes in regard to the French party that its "acceptance of political pluralism is an accomplished fact to the extent the party leadership recognizes [that the party] is not likely ever to be strong enough to achieve its goals alone." This language is, of course, the language of contingencies rather than morals; it suggests that the commitment to constitutional government is rooted in nothing more substantial than a reading of the current alignment of political

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* *National Review*, November 7, 1975.

† Oxford, 204 pp., $16.00.

** Princeton, 640 pp., $25.00.

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forces. The position of the party represents, in other words, a tactical assessment rather than a commitment in principle.

But then what would it mean to say that one is committed in point of principle to a constitutional order? It would have to mean, in the strictest sense, rejecting in principle those regimes that were decidedly not constitutional orders. In the case of the Communist parties the test would be simple but stern: If they are in fact committed now in principle to the preservation of constitutional government, then the very logic of that commitment should lead them to condemn the nature of the Soviet regime and break off their connections with the ruling Soviet party.

It is simply not enough to show that the Communist parties in Italy and France have established a considerable degree of independence from the Soviet party. No serious observer would doubt any longer that the French and Italian parties are substantially independent of the Soviet Union; but the question of independence is largely irrelevant to the main issue. The fact that Tito detached himself from the Soviet Union did not exactly move him to institute free elections and independent courts; and what can be said in this respect for Yugoslavia can be said in even greater measure for China, Albania, and Rumania.

The real question involves the character of Leninist principles. Is the Soviet Union still regarded by Communist parties in the West as a decent and legitimate version of a "socialist" regime? If it is not, why do the French and Italian parties continue to attach themselves to an international movement that has the Soviet Union as its leading member and chief model? To their credit, both Blackmer and Tarrow recognize this issue, but in a curious way they both neglect to draw the verdict that arises from their own explanations. Tarrow raises the question of whether the Italian party might reasonably be expected to dissolve its connections to the Soviet Union. That would be, he thinks, "too much" to expect, for the "identification . . . with international Communism remains a critical element in the . . . internal cohesion [of the Italian party]." As Blackmer puts it,

> The [Italian party] would find it difficult to maintain the viability of its self-image as a *Leninist* party—that is, as a disciplined, centralized party able to maintain unity and effectiveness while taking difficult decisions—if it were to cut itself off from the Soviet party that best represents the continuity and force of this political tradition.

The problem for the rest of us, however, is whether we can afford to take seriously the democratic "commitment" of parties that depend, for their continued cohesion and morale, on their adherence to principles that are incompatible at their base with the premise of a constitutional order. In the end we are led back to a very old—and very elementary—point: that there really was a rather clear division of principle established in the early 1920's between those groups of socialists who were willing to throw in with Lenin and the Third International, and those who decided that a socialist government had to be democratic or constitutional before it could be socialist in any proper sense. The latter group held back from the Communists to preserve an independent socialist movement; and that initial separation in the socialist camp still seems to bear an enduring logic. It is still pertinent, therefore, to ask just what the rationale may be at this date for preserving a Leninist party in politics if it is not to mark off a faction that still stands in some critical way outside the system—a group that seeks to convey, through its separate presence, that it has not yet been assimilated to the "bourgeois" order, or that the radical ends it has in view cannot be accomplished within the framework of a constitutional regime.

THERE WAS a moment at the end of February when the French and Italian parties seemed to be taking the steps that could lead to a break with the Communist movement. Georges Marchais, the leader of the French Communists, refused to attend the Congress of the Soviet party in Moscow, and he stayed away, ostensibly, as a form of protest over the repression of dissidents in the Soviet Union. His emissary went on to tell the Soviet Congress that the party in France would pursue "a socialism in the colors of France," which would include "the guarantee of all individual and collective liberties." The French spokesman was preceded the day before by Enrico Berlinguer, the leader of the Italian Communists, who made an equally assertive speech on behalf of the Italian party. Berlinguer told the Congress that the Italian road to socialism would have to correspond to "the peculiar characteristics of the historical, civil, and political development of our country," and for that reason the Italian party favored a "pluralistic and democratic system" with respect for the liberties of individuals.

As promising as these speeches might have been, the French and Italian leaders stopped notably short of severing their ties to the Soviet Union, and in a number of other statements they took care to affirm their sense of connection to the Communist movement. Marchais's representative at the Congress insisted that the differences between the French and Soviet parties should not present an obstacle to common action for their common ends; nor should it destroy the fraternity that binds the two parties on the principle of "proletarian internationalism and independence."*

Berlinguer's position was brought out earlier in the month in an interview with a writer from *La*

* *Le Monde*, February 29, 1976.

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Stampa. The question was raised as to why it was not in fact contradictory for Berlinguer to profess a commitment to a democratic regime while preserving the ties of his party to the Communist movement. Berlinguer replied that his party had sought for a long while to engage other socialist parties in a debate about the interpretation of Marxist doctrine. But quite apart from this interest in making a contribution to Marxist theory, Berlinguer was quick to add that the independence, in this respect, of the Italian party should not be taken to mean "that we wish to become Social Democrats, or that we cease to be internationalists."*

A number of the authors in the Blackmer and Tarrow book say, indeed, that it would be a mistake to believe that the Communists had turned into Social Democrats. Despite their alliances with other parties, the Communists have preserved a commitment to a "maximalist" perspective in the extension of public ownership and in the use of the powers of the state to bring about social change. There is a glimmer of expectation, also, as Ronald Tiersky senses, that a coalition of the Left could put through certain radical changes, which "might thereafter snowball into an irreversible and thoroughgoing transformation of society." And there one may in fact have the understanding that lies behind many of the surface contradictions in the position of the Communists: a sense, perhaps, that once the decisive steps are taken in a program of radical change, a dynamic will be set off, a new momentum in the direction of further nationalizations, which will bring in turn a new support for dealing with the enemies of the revolution. As Neil McInnes points out, the Communists have found strong bases of support among employees in the nationalized industries and the public services. If for no other motive than electoral advantage they would have the means now to deal even more generously with their supporters. And so one may find, overnight, the creation of a new constituency of people who would profit from an extension of the public sector, and who might feel seriously threatened by any prospect of rolling back nationalization.

Would the revolution be peaceful? "It depends," said Waldeck Rochet, the former leader of the French Communists, "on the degree of resistance by the exploiters to the will of the people." That resistance could be met in a number of ways —by restricting the right to take money out of the country, or to challenge legislation in the courts, for instance—or by restricting the right of the resisting classes to carry out a counterrevolution through the polls.

The Communist leaders in France and Italy have already declared their support for democratic liberties and their willingness to accept a regime of public competition, in which there is a chance to have an alternation of parties in power. But then Georges Marchais, the present leader of the French Communists, has said that he regards Bulgaria, Poland, and East Germany as examples of countries with a pluralistic party system. As McInnes observes, the going phrase since 1966 has been that the Communist parties in the West would tolerate any other party that "operated within the framework of socialist legality." That license clearly would not extend to forms of "sabotage organized by the former exploiting classes with a view to regaining power and restoring capitalism." As we have already seen in Portugal, the universe of acceptable parties can be contracted quite narrowly. What the military did in Portugal does not of course foreshadow what the Communist parties are likely to do in France or Italy; but it does serve as an example of the kinds of devices that are seen as plausible even by "socialists" who have not had the benefit of a career in a Leninist organization.

At the congress of the French party in February, Georges Marchais declared that the party was abandoning the doctrine of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." According to the polls, the French still tend to be suspicious, by and large, of these cosmic changes that are announced in the party from one month to the next. Their inclination is to regard them as largely tactical in nature, and there are indeed reasons to wonder whether the changes are grounded in principle. For a party that thinks of itself as authentically Marxist and revolutionary, there is something at the very least enigmatic in accepting a plurality of competitive parties as a continuing state of affairs. In the Marxist understanding, parties are the reflections of class interests taken to a higher level of consciousness in politics. To say that there could be, indefinitely, a plurality of parties is to say that the society could be divided irremediably between classes—and that it could be preserved in that cast even after a socialist revolution has taken place and the Communists have had a chance to work their measures. There may be nothing startling in that vision for conservatives (or even liberals), but it could hardly be incorporated by any party that would still see itself as a Marxist revolutionary party, rather than a collection of Social Democrats.

From another perspective, the Communist leaders may simply be relying on their "science" of society to solve the problem for them. Revolutions are not supposed to go backward, and once power has been transferred decisively from one class to

* The interview was published in a supplement to the *Times* of London, February 3. In Berlinguer's perspective the Italian Communist party was not aligned with any state or party; but it happened to support very strongly what he called "the Soviet Union's peace policy" as a policy that was in "the general interest of mankind." In the light of the Soviet actions in Vietnam and Angola within the last year, this "peace policy" is apparently capable of encompassing, for Berlinguer, a good measure of aggressiveness and risk-taking.

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another, it may simply be inconceivable to the Communist leadership that the process might be reversed. As recently as 1972 the saying in the French party was that "there can be no return from socialism to capitalism": elections might change the government, but they could never change the regime. It is against the background of these understandings that Marchais's comments on the place of the Communist party probably ought to be read: A majority of working people in the country may achieve certain social measures and even gain some new liberties, but the real satisfaction of their rights is totally impossible, says Marchais, without a change in the class structure of power. That kind of change will involve the socialist transformation of the society, and in order to have a socialist transformation the party of the working class—the only party that *could* represent the working class—must play a leading or even a *determining* role.* If it is unthinkable that history may go backward, it is clearly unthinkable also to Marchais that the Communist party may be dislodged if the socialist transformation is to be carried through.

For his own part, Marchais has not been wanting in those inventive restatements that can stir doubts even in the minds of the credulous. When he made his statement in public on abandoning the "dictatorship of the proletariat," he stopped to explain, in the best traditions of pedagogy, that by a "dictatorship" he meant, of course, the kinds of regimes that existed under Hitler, Mussolini, Salazar, and Franco. There was no hint that anything of that description had ever been found in the Russia of Stalin—and certainly no suggestion that anything of that genus might be present in the Soviet Union today. All of which confirms the sense of Annie Kriegel's plaint about the party: *"Il change, il change, et pourtant, non, rien n'est changé"* ("It is changing, it is changing, and yet nothing has changed").

But even if we gave Marchais and Berlinguer the benefit of the doubt, it would be foolish to suppose that the intentions of the French or Italian Communists can be fixed with precision, or that they are incapable of being altered rather quickly if some new possibilities were suddenly opened. "The point to note," says McInnes, "is not simply that the Communists have a more elastic notion of peace and nonviolence than other parties, but that they are less lucid about the inevitable consequences of their own actions."

THERE are, then, as McInnes concedes, many good reasons to be doubtful about the commitments of the Communist parties. But "against all such doubts," he says, "practice weighs more heavily," and "the practice of the West European [Communist parties] is electoralist, parliamentary, revisionist." And so although he is rather sober in his estimate of the Communist parties, his inclination is to come down on the side of those who would take a chance and admit the Communists to a share of responsibility.

That conclusion has been reached, on balance, by a number of other political commentators as well. William Pfaff has recently argued, for example, that Europe has been virtually "compelled to turn to its Communist parties in default of a more modern and relevant opposition."† In a passage that will surely add novelty to the tradition of moral reasoning, Pfaff tells us that the very weakness of the opposition parties in Italy and France makes it "necessary" to treat the Communist parties as legitimate "if there is to be serious opposition to the present governments":

> If the Communists are to be excluded from power and from alliance with democratic parties because they are the enemies of political pluralism—and of civil liberties and the parliamentary system—then it follows that in Italy the Christian Democrats must continue to rule.

One might as well say, with equal outrage, that if the United States were ruled by a coalition of Democrats and Republicans, and if the strongest party in opposition were the Nazis, then it would be "necessary" to treat the Nazis as legitimate unless we wished the Democrats and Republicans to rule indefinitely. The decency or legitimacy of any party can only arise from its own nature and the propriety of its ends; its moral standing cannot be a function simply of the weakness of other groups. One would hardly guess from Pfaff's remarks that Italy is well supplied at the moment with opposition parties, including parties on the Left. It is true that there is no single force in the opposition strong enough to challenge the dominant Christian Democratic party, and so if one rules out the Communists one rules out the only effective possibility for displacing the government. But if the Communists are now the strongest group in the opposition it is not because the Christian Democrats and their allies have crushed the rest of the opposition and put themselves in an unshakable position. The fact of the matter is that since the war a string of coalitions has been built around the Christian Democrats because that has been the main alternative for those voters who have wished to preserve constitutional government. For as long as a fourth or more of the vote was pinned down in support of the Communists, those who wished to vote first for constitutional government had to make their choices in a field of parties that was truncated on the Left. The danger was that the bloc of "constitutional" parties would fragment to the point of impotence, leaving the Communists as the strongest party in the system. In order to avoid that kind of situation one party had to be built up as the linchpin in a coalition of constitutional parties. For most of the period since the

* On this point, see Marchais's speech to the party congress, reprinted in *Le Monde*, February 5, 1976.

† *New Yorker*, January 12, 1976.

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war, then, a vote for the Christian Democrats has marked a resolve, in the first instance, to preserve a non-Communist, constitutional government—and to support that party which could form the enduring center for a government of that kind.

For Pfaff, the Communist party ought to be treated as legitimate essentially because it is there, and in the absence of a commitment on the part of the Communists to constitutional government all he can offer in mitigation is that the Communists do not possess "a *united wish* to suppress liberal government, deny majorities their right . . . and establish a dictatorship" [emphasis added]. If the French or Italians should have the misfortune of falling into the hands of those members of the party who do carry such urges, he holds out this piece of consolation: that "if the Communists refused to call an election or abide by the results of one, they could be forced out through an uprising, if it came to that." It takes a rare confidence in constitutional government—to say nothing of a paradoxical morality—to accept the legitimacy of a party that denies the moral premises on which constitutional orders are founded, and then to find the salvation of democracy in the willingness of the military to intervene in politics *after* a regime of law has broken down. As far as the polity is concerned, that is, as Oscar Wilde said, a case of dying beyond our means.

ACCORDING to Irving Howe,* the greater "looseness" in the Communist parties of the West is "not yet a sufficient reason for supposing that [they have] genuinely accepted the terms of parliamentary democracy." He, too, is unaffected by illusions, and yet his judgment in the end is that it would be a "form of political sterility" to reject out of hand the possibility of an alliance with the Communist parties in Italy and France. An alliance of that kind in either country would clearly bring certain advantages to the Communists, but it would bring some "strategic dangers" for them as well, and in those dangers may be found some benign possibilities. There is the chance, first, as Howe says, "for breaking the hold these parties have on the French and Italian working classes." Howe does not trace out to its fuller reach his sense of the possibilities, but one gathers that it runs well beyond the mere undercutting of the Communists. At the most promising level, a policy of coalition could play upon those inner tensions in the character of the Communist parties, and it might set in train the kinds of changes that could finally attach the Communists more surely to a constitutional order. In that event, one might break down at last the isolation of many Communist voters, who have understood their vote for the Communists as a sign of their rejection of a "bourgeois" order and as a willful act of detachment from their fellow citizens. And if changes of this nature should take place in France and Italy, where the Communist parties have been the most formidable, the effect on Communist parties elsewhere—and indeed on Communist regimes in other places—could be diffusive.

This is, overall, in its sweep and plausibility, an appealing vision. The problem, though, is not merely that the empirical assumptions in the analysis are highly problematic, but that the strategy itself cannot be pursued except on grounds of principle that undercut the whole effort and raise the likelihood of evils that are worse yet.

The first point in Howe's schedule of possibilities is that, through a relation of intimacy or coalition, the Socialists may come to win over a large portion of the Communist voters. In regard to the Communists in France, he claims to detect a certain apprehension on their part that they may be replaced by the Socialists as the leading party on the Left. All of this may be possible, and in fact some recent surveys in France show the Socialists to have moved ahead of the Communists in popular support, while the following of the Communists has remained stationary or even shrunk a bit. One suspects that there have been some minor shifts to the Socialists on the part of former Communist voters, which means that the alliance on the Left may indeed have served in some degree to make the Socialists more acceptable to a number of Communist supporters. But one would have to recognize, too, that the process may work just as well the other way, particularly if the Communists manage to appear more plausible as a governing party through the participation of their leaders in the government.

In fact, one could argue that in the long run the odds may favor the Communists more heavily in this contest than the Socialists. The Communists are, for one thing, much more cohesive than the Socialists, with followers who tend to be more committed, on the average, than those of other parties. As Neil McInnes has shown, the Communists have traditionally made their most important electoral gains in Western Europe by cutting into those areas that had been the strongholds of other parties on the Left. If they succeed now in winning a large acceptance for themselves, their gains in the future will probably come again at the expense of the Left.

Indeed, that is likely to be the more natural tendency as the very logic of coalition begins to work itself out; in order to prepare their own followers for a coalition with the Communists, the French Socialist leaders have been compelled to play down the question of commitment to constitutional government and to suggest that it should not be regarded as very decisive after all. Once their followers have been delivered from that major inhibition, once they have been schooled to believe that the foremost interest they share is in driving the society to the point of something

* *Dissent*, Fall 1975.

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called a "revolution," one should not be surprised if they end up preferring leaders who have claimed at least to be "revolutionaries" all their lives, and who have not had their commitment alloyed over the years with the reservations of Social Democrats.

In an off moment a few years ago, François Mitterand boasted that his party might be able to siphon off about two or three million votes from the Communists. When the remarks leaked out, the story has it that Georges Marchais, the leader of the French Commmunists, received the news with "amused contempt." At the moment, however, the Socialists seem to be the main beneficiaries of the alliance with the Communists, and they have emerged in some of the recent polls as the party that commands the largest following in the country (some 27-30 per cent of the voters who have been surveyed). The figures have been convincing enough, at any rate, to the government, because intimations have been offered rather heavily now that the Socialists ought to drop the alliance with the Communists and come into the government as part of a large, non-Communist majority. As one might expect, the Socialists have not exactly been clutching at these lines that have been cast out to them from the government, even though they have had their own share of headaches in managing an alliance with the Communists. Given a choice, the Socialists would probably prefer the prospect of taking power through a coalition in which they stood as the leading partner. Beyond that, politicians are prisoners of correlations, and the Socialists know that they have made their greatest gains in the polls only since they have been allied with the Communists and the two parties have become, in combination, a plausible contender for a majority. What the Socialists may fear (quite accurately) is that, if they immerse themselves now, as junior partners, in a coalition with the "bourgeois" parties, they will undercut that special force they have been able to generate as allies of the Communist party.

But of course the origin of this new strength for the Socialists may be the source also of their entrapment. If they have been able to enlarge their support only because they have aligned themselves with the most radical adversaries of the existing order, they may come to regard it as politically perilous in the future to pull back at any point to a policy of moderation. At any given moment the political incentives, as they read them, may push the party in the direction of measures that are more, rather than less, radical. And so if the Socialists manage to win over larger numbers of Communist voters it may only be because they have absorbed in themselves the essential character and commitments of the Communists. Presumably, that is not the state of affairs that Irving Howe had in mind when he contemplated the prospect of the Socialists absorbing a good portion of the Communists and their followers.

It may be too early then to say that the Socialists have "succeeded" in siphoning off support from the Communists. Whether we can expect the Socialists or the Communists to come out ahead in the end will depend on our estimate of how a program of the Left is likely to work out in practice, and on the temper of those people who would form the constituency for a government containing Communists as well as Socialists. If a government of the Left finds that the injustices of the world abate under the influence of its measures; that its policies in fact prove adequate to its ends; that its expectations do not fall too far short of satisfaction—then we might anticipate little strain, and the Communists may find themselves growing more comfortable with the conventions of "bourgeois" democracy. But if it turns out that a government of the Left will seek ends beyond any reasonable scale of its means; that it will set off chains of dislocations and miseries; that every shortfall in policy will elicit remedies that are ever more extreme—then the experience may serve only to quicken the impatience of the government and enlarge the appetite of its followers.

IT IS curious that in the recent efforts to give an account of the Communist parties, there is almost no attempt to judge their substantive ends—to say, for example, whether the economic programs of these parties are at all practicable or whether they can be morally justified. The only hint of such a judgment in *Communism in Italy and France* comes in an essay by Annie Kriegel. As she notes, the French Communists are well aware by now that "a nationalized economy cannot alone resolve the problems of growth—the experience of Eastern European countries has made that abundantly clear." Still, the Communists in France have a rather extensive list of nationalizations in mind, even if they have not been able to sell that list so far to their Socialist allies. In their common program the Socialists and Communists have pledged to nationalize commercial banks and the armament and space industries. On their own side, the Communists would add savings banks, insurance companies, and what they quaintly call "key *de facto* monopolies"—e.g., the electronic and aeronautics industries, air-transport companies, the chemical and steel industries, and automobile factories that have not yet been nationalized. Nationalization may not solve the problem of production and growth, but as Miss Kriegel points out, the value of the nationalization for the French Communists is that it expands the political and economic power of the nation-state, and in doing that it serves two other ends: (1) it retards the integration of French firms into the European Common Market (and thereby furthers the weakening of that organization); and (2) it encourages closer relations between a nationalized economy in France and the statist economies in Eastern Europe.

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Both the Italian and the French Communist parties had been rather averse in the past to schemes of "workers' control" or "self-administration" in factories, but recently they have professed to look more favorably on these proposals. Just how serious they are depends on how much power they would be willing to leave to local firms in making decisions on production. A happier variant for them comes in a plan by the French party, which would allow a majority of workers in any firm to request the government to nationalize the enterprise. Putting aside the impertinent question of just how a majority of workers derives a proprietary control in any enterprise simply by being there, the project has a potential for vast mischief. One could easily conceive, for example, of a case that has been encountered in part already in Chile and Portugal; a group of militant unions, in league with the governing party, may cause disruption in the workplace and give the government a pretext for taking over the enterprise. If the workers happen to be printers and the firm happens to be a newspaper, the device could be used quite handily to "nationalize" the opposition press.

Were the risks not so grave, there might be some appeal in the idea of allowing the Communists the chance that other parties have had to make fools of themselves. Why should they not be forced to take responsibility, to test their theory against practice, and discover the perversity with which the world declines to yield to their designs? In the case of the Communists, though, and their allied partisans, there is probably no practicable way in which experience may supply the defect of understanding. After a term of the Left in office, we would come to learn, once again, that the nationalization of more industries—or the introduction of "workers' control"—does not necessarily raise the standard of living, or make most workers happier at their jobs, or even augment the conditions of justice. With each disappointment it would be assumed that the revolution had not gone far enough—that the disease required a medicine that was sterner yet. And for those who were true believers, the experience might only teach one of two things. It might suggest that the Communists were too bourgeois to carry out a revolution and they must be replaced by a party that is more radical and less sissified; or it might confirm, as so many of them had thought, that one cannot have a revolution within the framework of a constitutional order.

It is the hope, though, of Irving Howe and others that most Communist voters are not disposed to be pushed in a more radical direction and that their moderation will exert a certain "drag" or restraint on the leadership. What Howe is drawn to here is evidence suggesting that there has been a marked decline in the commitment of party members and that Communist voters are, to a large extent, rather conventional and conservative in their attitudes. He recalls, for example, the evidence cited by Neil McInnes on the state of membership in the parties in Western Europe: hardly more than a third or a half of the Communist members these days subscribe to the party paper; many members attend local party meetings only once or twice a year; and even more to the point, the turnover in membership has been surprisingly high—in France, 66 per cent between 1969 and 1972. (That is to say, McInnes estimates that membership in the party remained stable at about 250,000 between 1969 and 1972, but that two-thirds of the original group were no longer present by 1972.)

When one sets these figures against recent surveys on the attitudes of Communist voters, one may understand the question that has been raised as to whether these supporters furnish the materials of which revolutions are made. It would appear from surveys that most people who vote for the French Communist party do not want revolution or believe that the party wants it either. About 90 per cent of them accept the rights of inheritance; half of them defend inequalities of income and wealth as legitimate and even necessary; and a quarter to a third of them oppose the nationalization of private business. After the elections of 1973 the Communists in France came out strongly for the sanctity of private property—or for the sanctity of that property that does not belong to "monopolists"—and for many years now they have been reserved, to say the least, about "sexual freedom" and abortion.

As for the Italian party, it has declared in favor of a "mixed economy," which could avoid many of the problems that have arisen in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe under heavily centralized systems. (But the party is also committed to the amalgamation of businesses into collectives and associations, and it would be a mistake to assume that it has made its peace with the notion of a market economy.) As a part of its domestic statecraft the party has deliberately sought a course of accommodation with the Catholic Church. It has still managed to attract only a minuscule portion of Catholics (most of whom continue to doubt that Leninism meshes very well with Catholicism), but nearly 85 per cent of the Communist voters in one recent survey professed to see no serious conflict in being a "good Catholic" and a "good Communist."

Beyond that, the parties in both Italy and France have staked out a record of moderation in their administration of local governments. In places like Bologna and Argenteuil the Communist administrations have been models of efficiency and responsible management, and it appears that the parties might have softened in that way the obduracy of some of their opponents. All things considered, then, one can see why many serious commentators are inclined to believe that the Communists have settled in now rather comforta-

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bly with a constitutional order and that they are simply too enmeshed in the system to think of overthrowing it.

AND YET, these points of evidence are not unequivocal; nor are they ultimately convincing in establishing the case they seek to prove. Against the figures on turnover in the party, there is the persisting evidence that for many members it is highly important that their party is associated with a movement that carried through a major revolution in the Soviet Union, and that the party in their own countries has preserved the position of an adversary in relation to the political system. As Sidney Tarrow notes, there is still, in the French party, a strong suspicion of members whose commitment is less than total. There is a lingering distrust of those who give an important part of their lives to people and associations outside the web of the party, and as one leader of the party remarked, there must even be a suspicion of those members "who buy another paper instead of the Communist daily." All this is part of the mystique that attaches to the party as a "vanguard party"—a party whose vocation is to transform the society, and which must be compelled then to detach itself from the society it seeks to change.

This notion of the Communists as the vanguard party has been brought out at some length by Ronald Tiersky in his book, *French Communism 1920-72.** As Tiersky observes, the preservation of a "Communist counter-community" in France has produced a situation in which "the Communist movement remains now the most significant segment of the polity outside the generally accepted rules of the game." That isolation may firm up the sense of mission in the party; but it hardly advances the claim that the Communists have become integrated with the rest of the society or that they share with their fellow citizens the fundamental premises that underlie the political order.

There is ample evidence to show, also, that in almost all competitive parties there are important differences between the party activists and those people who make up the support for the party at the polls. It is not surprising then to find that many Communist *voters* share attitudes of a more conventional nature with the supporters of other parties, while the activists still harbor the hopes of generating a revolution. In Britain, before the last general election, the *Times* of London published a survey showing heavy opposition in the public to any further nationalizations. That opposition held at very high levels even among supporters of the Labour party, and even among workers in nationalized industries. And yet none of that has held back the Labour government in its aspiration to nationalize the aircraft and shipbuilding industries. The leadership in the Labour party has continued to act in many places as though its first obligation were to respect the coherence of its program rather than those "opinions" held among its supporters—opinions that may not aways reflect, after all, the matured interests of the Labour movement. But if that kind of independence is shown even by a party like the British Labourites, why should one expect the Communist leaders in Italy or France to be any more restrained by their followers in taking the steps that they finally see as necessary to their ends?

As for the record of Communist parties in local administration, it is again less conclusive than many commentators suggest. On the one hand it is a decent one. But in *Communism in Italy and France*, Denis Lacorne reports an interview with one local Communist official who complains that "there is no way to develop a left-wing administration [at the local level] when you are totally dependent on the state, the prefect, and the Planning Board . . . for your investments and your expenses." That is to say, in a highly developed administrative state that is not under the control of the Left, municipal administration may be no more than—municipal administration; and if the local Communist officials happen to be successful, it may be because the system allows them to use the resources of the party to act more like Mayor Daley than like the men who are now plying the trade of "municipal administration" in Saigon and Pnom-Penh. As Jerome Milch points out, the Communist party in France has long regarded the notion of "municipal socialism" as a kind of absurdity: whatever else may be accomplished, the party has no illusions that the nation is going to make its way to socialism through a string of "revolutionary" governments at the local level. In other words, the parties themselves are fully aware that the things they do now in administering local government may not reflect the character of rule in the future under a "socialist" regime.

One is moved to consider just what might happen in Italy and France if the lines were drawn sharply again between those parties that were committed to constitutional government and those parties whose commitment remained in serious doubt. It is at least possible that such a renewed assertion of principle would firm up the cohesion of the non-Communist parties as it did in the past, when the parties were able to isolate the Communists from the levers of influence—as, for example, by barring them from important legislative committees and by denying them the benefits of an alliance. If that should occur, some members of the party—and a good many voters—might simply grow averse after a while to the notion of disenfranchising themselves: for while they pinned themselves down in voting for the Communist party they would not be able to affect the balance of strength among those parties that were in a position to influence public policy and determine the composition of the government. That prospect

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might be discouraging enough to cause members and voters to drift quietly out of the party. If people left the French party in large numbers in the late 60's and early 70's, when times were relatively good, it is not inconceivable that they would drift away even more heavily if the political situation became demoralizing.

In the case of Italy, Giacomo Sani has documented, through surveys, the depth of the opposition that still endures in Italy to the Communist party. Until the advent of the neo-Fascist group, the *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, the Communists were far and away the party that was most likely to be regarded by a majority of the voters as flatly unacceptable. If the threat on the Right should diminish, the Communists may quickly regain their lead in this dubious contest. But the point is that objective conditions for opposition clearly exist, and only those who do not know what has been done in the past would dismiss out of hand the suggestion that something may be done, even now, to erode support for the Communist parties.

THE question then is: what should the United States do? If one believes that the ascension of the Communists is virtually inevitable, for example, in Italy, then one might argue, as Peter Lange does in a recent issue of *Foreign Policy*, that the best thing for the United States to do would be to preserve a chance to influence the Communists once they are in office.* We could do that, to begin with, by backing away from a policy of intransigence and by opening up conversations with the Communist leaders. Lange does not precisely say what benefits would accrue to the United States and the Western alliance from a posture of this kind. (It hardly seems likely, for example, that overtures of this nature would buy the support of the Communists, in the long run, for NATO.) In the meantime Lange lists as one notable influence in the recent growth of the Communist party the fact that the party began to be treated as plausible and respectable by some of the leading non-Communist journals in Italy. In the light of that, it is beyond belief that he could fail to see that any move on the part of the United States to deal in public with the Italian Communists could not help but have a profound effect in itself on the political situation in Italy. It would make inevitable in fact what is now, for Lange and others, inevitable in theory.

If the United States does not seek out relations with the Italian party, Lange warns that "the effect might well be to weaken the party's ability to maintain autonomy [in relation to] the Soviet Union." But surely he must appreciate that in the coldest calculus of realism it might well serve the interests of the United States if the Communist party in Italy *were* to become more dependent on the Soviet Union. Nothing would be more likely to restore the cohesion of the non-Communist parties, or bring out in them again their resolve to do what is necessary in order to rule without dependence on the Communists. From the experience of the French party before the war, one could say, too, that if the Italian party became more dependent on the Soviet Union, nothing would be more likely to put the party in Italy out of mesh with Italian politics and lay the gentle hand of disaster upon it.

Still, we ought to consider, in the same spirit of realism, that the Communists may well succeed in joining the government sooner or later, and the question must again be asked, what can America do? As the main step we could encourage the Europeans to draw the lines sharply again in domestic politics on the issue of constitutional government and the ties that the Communists still preserve in principle to the Communist movement. There is no reason why the Communists should not be faced insistently with these points, and in the process they might be pressed to make some serious concessions. It might even be suggested to them that relations with the United States could improve in some tangible ways if the party took a few simple but fundamental steps: if it broke off, for example, its relations with the Soviet Union and the Communist movement; if it changed its name to something like the "Independent Communist party" (something, in other words, that would convey publicly its break in principle from the Soviet Union); and if it let the Stalinists hive off to form a separate Communist party, licensed by the Soviet Union. No set of moves would go as far to indicate that the Communist parties are indeed what their sympathizers claim them to be: parties that are interested in carrying out far-reaching, radical changes within the framework of a democratic order. If the parties were reluctant to take these steps, they might at least come to understand more clearly the grounds on which their critics in the West continue to hold reservations about them. We might find then that even if the Communists came to power, they would have gone somewhat further in responding to the objections of the United States. At the same time, they would understand very precisely while they were in office those moves on their part that would confirm the validity of the argument that the United States had been raising against them.

Is it too late for a policy of resistance to have effect? That policy would depend on a renewed understanding on the part of the non-Communist parties that the question of constitutional government is in fact the main question. But it is that conviction, clearly, that has begun to erode, and the erosion has shown itself most notably in the understandings of those political men who carry the responsibility for a decision. During his visit last year to America, François Mitterand conceded that there were indeed certain dangers in his pol-

* "What Is to be Done—About Italian Communism?" Winter 1975-76.

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icy of coalition with the Communists. But there were dangers, he thought, everywhere in life, and at this moment the overriding issue in France was the position of the working class. For his own part, Mitterand would hope to create the kinds of conditions that would induce the Communists to behave. What he fails to acknowledge is that the question has moved well beyond the matter of his cleverness in keeping the Communists within bounds—or even beyond the estimates made by Neil McInnes, Irving Howe, and others on what the Communists are likely to do under different conditions. Once one understands that there is a reasonable doubt about the commitment of the Communists to constitutional government, the danger is not so much in the things that the Communists may or may not do, but in the lessons that public leaders are now willing to convey. By saying that the overriding issue is the position of the working class, one is saying that the commitment to democratic government is not in fact the question of first importance—that there are other interests that one regards now as far higher. The result may be comparable to the state of affairs that set in at the end of the Weimar period in Germany, when large portions of the electorate, following the lead of their parties, ceased to regard as very important the question of one's commitment to a democratic regime: The impression was fostered, inescapably, that an anti-democratic party was as "usable" as any other ally one could pick up on the street and that, in a democracy, no perspective was so base that it could not be regarded as legitimate.

If Mitterand himself is too slow to grasp this point, the Communists are not. They understand perfectly well that membership in a governing coalition can do for them now what membership in a grand coalition did for the British Labour party during World War II or for the German Socialists in the 1960's: It can render more plausible to the public the notion of Communists in positions of official responsibility. Once the Communists have been established in the public mind as a party with the respectability and the competence to govern, they may be able to cast their allies aside and take power on their own.

When one realizes how close Mitterand actually came, with his coalition, to the achievement of power, one recognizes in a sudden, sober way that the fears expressed by Walter Laqueur and others over the "Finlandization" of Western Europe are rather firm in their grounding after all, and the situation they apprehend is not as speculative or as distant as might once have been hoped.

It is not that Mitterand himself is out to dismantle NATO or to weaken the Common Market, for he has declared himself at least to be in favor of NATO and willing to support the Common Market. The point, rather, is that the logical tendency of his policy on coalition is to build up that party, in his own country and elsewhere, which is indeed committed to the dismantling of NATO, the weakening of the Common Market, and the dissolution of any other organization in Europe that would divide East and West. The danger need not be overstated for its true seriousness to be recognized. As McInnes puts it, the aim of the Communist parties is to break down the regional barriers in Western Europe and "promote economic cooperation within a politically disunited and militarily defenseless Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals under Russian leadership." And that, for any man of democratic commitment, is a sufficient danger in itself.

As Alfred Grosser noted recently in *Le Monde*,* it is the presence of American power and NATO that has allowed the preservation in Europe of that politics of party competition which the Communists claim to regard now in Italy and France as integral to their national ways of life. It is not unrealistic then to think that the pressures bearing on those same Communist parties might be considerably different in a Europe in which NATO had been dissolved; in which America had lost both the leverage and the will for military action; and in which the Soviet Union were established as the dominant power. Even if we credit the Communist leaders in Italy and France with the most sincere good intentions, the fact that is hard to evade is that their own coming to power would itself be taken as the sign of a new dynamic at work in Europe—and indeed in the rest of the world as well. Whether they intended it or not, their ascension would help to establish expectations about a new structure of power in the world, in which the balance had shifted decisively to the side of the Communist movement; and those expectations in turn might encourage the Communists in Italy and France to look again at alternatives that they have felt constrained only recenly to rule out of hand.

Grosser contends that Marchais is well aware of these possibilities and that, for his own part, he has no special desire to be the Dubcek of France. That may be the reason, also, that Berlinguer speaks about the value of preserving NATO at least for the short run as the best means eventually for doing away with all military blocs in Europe. But even assuming that all these things are true, Marchais and Berlinguer may nevertheless be overlooking the extent to which they may be the authors of events they cannot control—and of pressures moving them toward ends that they themselves have declared they have no wish to choose. Even on the most charitable construction, it may be then, as Neil McInnes says, that in the end the Communists are in fact not very "lucid about the inevitable consequences of their own actions," or they are simply not very candid about an outcome that they, as much as others, should be able to foresee.

* March 2, 1976.

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The Litvak Connection & Hasidic Chic

Chaim Raphael

A LITVAK, in prosaic terms, is simply a Jew whose family happens to come from Lithuania; mythopoetically speaking, however, being a Litvak is a state of mind. The Litvak thinks of himself (especially vis-à-vis his traditional "enemy," the Polish Jew) as endowed by Providence with a true sense of values: he is committed to reason and realism instead of fantasy—he is intelligent, open-minded, ironic (in the style of Hamlet) but immovable on principle. The enduring purpose in Jewish life, he is sure, is expressed in the Litvak connection.

Hamlet found the truth about his inner feelings conveyed to him by a ghost from the past. Litvaks turn in the same way to a man whose legendary presence has haunted them now for two centuries —Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon (1720-97), the Gaon of Vilna. Vilna, ancient capital of Lithuania, was the Litvak's Jerusalem. "Gaon"—supreme scholar —is the accolade Litvaks gave their hero.

The fascination he exerted was not at the time, and has never been since, merely a tribute to scholarship, though in this regard Elijah Vilna (his "secular" name) was undoubtedly outstanding in a recognized rabbinical pattern—descendant of a long line of rabbis, a talmudic prodigy at six, master in every field of Jewish study. Perhaps his contemporaries recognized—as we certainly can in retrospect—that there was a peculiar radiance in his intellect through which a rabbinic tradition that had been running to seed for centuries was clarified, shorn of excrescence, almost revolutionized, through a return to first principles. Looked at this way the Gaon has become, for the instinctive Litvaks of this world, a symbol of what they feel far beyond the confines of talmudic study itself. Like the Gaon, a Litvak is liable to be a *Mitnagged*—an "opposer," a spurner of Polish Hasidism, in connection with which the term originated. The Gaon took a stand both in public action and in scholarly writing against the early spread of Hasidism in his time, and we can see today how significant this was for the emergence of a Litvak type of mind. In his memory a Litvak is encouraged to break a lance with the hasidic chic of our own time.

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Nothing of what the Gaon wrote was published in his lifetime, but notes on a great range of subjects—Bible, Talmud, Midrash, Zohar—were collected and published later by disciples. The introductions to these books include a good deal of first- and second-hand information about his life, and even more about his personal ideas, sometimes highly evocative. Most important in this regard are the comments and memories of his main disciple, Rabbi Chaim ben Isaac of Volozhyn.

The raw material is often desultory, originating sometimes in notes scribbled in the margins of the books the Gaon read. What gives his work unity is the originality of his approach. In his own terms he would have said that all he was doing was encouraging the "correct" study of the Torah and Talmud by getting back to the original texts, throwing out guesswork and *pilpul* (logic-chopping), establishing the simple thread of meaning *(p'shat)* before turning to commentary *(d'rash)*; and he called also for a study of "other knowledge," including philosophy, the "science of the Greeks," since by definition all true knowledge was consistent with—and would therefore amplify —the Jewish faith.

This last point has often been misunderstood. It had nothing very "liberal" about it; the aim was to make his students better Jews. A former pupil, Rabbi Baruch of Sklow, who translated Euclid into Hebrew at his request, quotes the Gaon as saying: "For each single thing that one fails to understand in 'the other kind of knowledge,' one will lack a hundredfold in understanding of the Torah." One sees immediately how different this is from the policy of the German-Jewish movement of Enlightenment, the Haskalah, as expressed, say, by Moses Mendelssohn—to drag Jews into the mainstream. Historically, as we shall see, the Gaon's work was liberating, but in a form that gave priority to the survival of Jewish values. As someone once said: Mendelssohn translated Hebrew works into German to give them a German tinge, while the Gaon wanted to have works from other languages put into Hebrew "to make them Jewish." The truth from Mt. Sinai would always be what mattered: it was in this sense that he opposed what were to him the distractions—the false tendencies—in Hasidism.

The story of the Gaon's confrontation with Has-

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idism is usually told in simplistic terms. Hasidism itself is described, for example, in Cecil Roth's *Short History of the Jewish People* as a "revivalist movement," reflecting "the messianic stir" of the times of Sabbatai Sevi (1626-76), and given shape by the mysterious saint Israel ben Eleazar (1700-70), "a simple Podolian lime-digger . . . a tender-hearted mystic of rare personal magnetism," who became known to disciples as "Baal Shem Tov," or "Besht" for short.* Marvelous legends were told of him. His followers were devout in new ways (*hasidim* means "pious ones"). The fervor of worship was held by them to be more illuminating than study. Anyone, however ignorant, could achieve communion with God if he approached Him in surrender and joy; but there were certain Righteous Ones (*tzaddikim*) who were uniquely close to the Almighty and whose intercession could work wonders. The movement spread north, permeated with ecstatic worship and always geared to a local *tzaddik*. When it began to take root in Lithuania, the Gaon issued a number of edicts of excommunication, and the fight between Hasidim and *Mitnaggdim* ("opponents") was launched.

THE foregoing outline is fair enough, but the Gaon's response calls for a fuller picture. There is, first of all, little in the origin of Hasidism that connects directly with the failed messianism of Sabbatai Sevi, since his impact on Polish Jewry was very diffuse.† Moreover, Hasidism, viewed simply as a new realization of direct communion with God, leaves out of account something less idealistic—the central and long-entrenched role among Jews of magic, incantation, and superstition generally. As far back as the period in which the Talmud was being formulated in Babylonia (3rd-6th centuries C.E.), the Jews, as Jacob Neusner has shown,** were deeply involved in these practices, which were part of the "uniform mythic structure" of all religious communities of the Middle East. If much of this became softened in later centuries, it is still no surprise to find a faith in magic surviving or surfacing in the remote and primitive areas of southern Poland in the 17th and 18th centuries. Bernard Weinryb's *The Jews of Poland* provides lively detail. "Baal Shem," a general name applied to a holy man, came to mean "a healer, quack doctor, miracle worker, or charmer." Such men treated patients with folk remedies (herbs, ointments) or with amulets, prayers, and incantations; some of them could expel evil spirits, predict the future, or perform miracles.

The father of Hasidism spent the first part of his life as just such an itinerant healer, "ministering to the needs of Jewish leaseholders, tax-collectors, and innkeepers, and occasionally to a non-Jewish nobleman." At this stage he was less the otherworldly saint that legend later projected than a kind of workaday rabbi, occasional *shohet* (ritual slaughterer), and (in early American terms) a medicine-man with a gift for storytelling. Yet a movement of powerful influence grew around him when he finally settled down in Medzibezh, and it provoked a struggle that split Jewry apart. What we need to know, especially in relation to the Gaon, is to what extent Hasidism created (or stumbled upon) some new deep truths about man and God, and to what extent it has been a diversion, and a misleading one, from the abiding message of Jewish experience.

To see Hasidism simply as a folk-movement expressing fervor and a longing for joy does not take us very far. It was soon evident that even if its hallmark was emotion, it had an implicit theology, and one which ran counter to established ideas. In conventional Jewish thought, God was a personal Being, Master of the Universe, who had imposed a moral order on man by giving Jews the Torah. Through obedience to it, the Jew became aware of the concepts of right and wrong. The world of man was an arena of reality: man, responsible for his own conduct, applied his reason to the achievement of God's purpose—a world of order and compassion. To Hasidism, by contrast, the quest was for a transformation of the individual soul through mystery. God relied on man as an active participant in the metaphysics of the universe, and the *tzaddik* had a special insight into this, each *tzaddik* in his own way. "Ordinary" men, attached to a *tzaddik*, were transformed in living out their attachment to his person. Every aspect of life—including the basic concepts of right and wrong—could receive a new emphasis through him. "Personality took the place of doctrine," as Gershom Scholem has put it.

According to Scholem, Hasidism in its original form was both revolutionary and conservative. The new element was the role—and effect—of the *tzaddik*: but in the background were the long-established mysteries of Kabbalah. The ancient lore of the Kabbalah had acquired a new hold on the Jewish people in the 16th century through the work of an outstanding scholar-mystic, Isaac Luria (1534-72), who expounded a mythos of "exile and redemption." In the Lurianic view, "sparks of the divine life and thought are scattered in exile over the entire world, and they long through the actions of men to be 'lifted up' and restored to their original place in the divine harmony of all being." Though these theosophical ideas were not fully developed in the popular expression of Hasidism, the language of early hasidic writings reflected them. Even for the "ordinary" Hasid the "sparks" were everywhere, to be "lifted up" through reli-

* The title is usually translated incorrectly as "Master of the Good Name." It really means "Goodly Possessor, or Wielder, of the [divine] Name."

† Gershom Scholem traces a number of influences in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1961), pp. 330-1; but see also Bernard Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland* (1973), p. 228.

** *A History of the Jews of Babylonia*, Vol. V (1970), pp. 180-6 and 217-43.

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gious intensity. For the scholar there were mysteries beyond this—the study of signs and portents in numbers, letters, and constellations—and the scholar could also reach out into "practical Kabbalah," the achievement of the supernatural, of which one might not speak to the uninitiated.

KABBALAH had a fascination for medieval rabbis; and the Gaon was himself an ardent student of its doctrines, experimenting even in "practical Kabbalah." How is one to reconcile this with his denunciation of the spread of Hasidism? Is it not, as the 19th-century historian Heinrich Graetz thought, a fatal objection to any claim made for him as an intellectual—a rationalist? Graetz, a product of the German-Jewish Enlightenment and full of contempt for Hasidim ("tricksters," he called them), had tried in his pioneering *History of the Jews* to turn the Gaon into a paragon of rationalism. But there was a flaw: the Gaon "had been seized with the delusion that the hateful Kabbalah was a true daughter of Judaism and contained true elements." Even when the excesses of Hasidism were brought to his notice, "he could not relinquish his blind fondness for the Kabbalah."

It is quite true that the Gaon was not the tireless *public* foe of Hasidism that legend has established. He disliked many things he had heard about the movement—its contempt for study, *tzaddik*-worship, exaggerated fervor, changes in ritual. More seriously, he felt that there were specific heresies in hasidic theology, and these he criticized in scholarly argument. For the most part, nevertheless, he drew back from direct confrontation. It has been argued, indeed, that he was impelled into denunciation of the Hasidim less by theological than by social considerations. Bernard Weinryb, putting this idea forward, suggests that the Gaon was probably a tool of community politics in the nasty, quarrelsome, indeed ruthless atmosphere of 18th-century Vilna. In this view, Hasidism, as it spread from the primitive areas of the south and began to find a foothold in Lithuania/White Russia, was less a new breath of religious ardor than an expression of social protest. For the "ordinary people" of Vilna, joining a hasidic *minyan* (prayer group) was an act of rebellion, a stick with which to beat communal leaders who clung desperately to the status quo—their financial control of the community and their privileged position with the government authorities. The Gaon, though not the official rabbi, was supported financially by the leadership, and they had no hesitation in exploiting his prestige in what was basically a socio-political battle. By taste, the Gaon might have preferred to pursue his thoughts within the confines of his study, but he did what the establishment told him to do. The proof can be seen, Weinryb argues, in the *timing* of his pronouncements—their relation to the high points of community conflict.*

An earlier social historian, Simon Dubnow, belittled the Gaon from another standpoint, yet came around in the end, oddly enough, to a paean of praise for what the Lithuanian background—exemplified by the Gaon—achieved for Jewish experience in *alliance* with Hasidism. In Dubnow's great populist *History of the Jews*, the Gaon as an *individual* is treated unsympathetically: he is backward-looking, "the venerable knight of rabbinism." But Lithuania itself was for Dubnow a *liberating* environment, imparting a strong intellectualism to the primitive ideas of Hasidism and to this extent steering the movement into the mainstream of Jewish life.

The rabbinic tradition alone, Dubnow says, was "doomed to sterility," even in the hands of the Gaon. Hasidism also, though for different reasons, was not geared to the future. But though in its original form in the south it was anti-intellectual—"a cult of the *tzaddikim*"—the social conditions in the north (around Vilna) allowed different influences to make themselves felt. This explains how it was that as Hasidism spread northward into Lithuania, one strand of the movement, under the leadership of a really creative thinker, Shneur Zalman of Lyady, had a chance to break away from primitivism. This new element in Hasidism increasingly reflected the emphasis on Talmud study that characterized Vilna, "seeking to adapt the emotional pietism of the Baal Shem to the intellectualism of the Lithuanian schoolmen," as Dubnow puts it.†

Dubnow's praise for Vilna's "rationalization" of Hasidism (it "transformed the ecstasy of feeling into an ecstasy of thinking") is a sharp contrast to the view of Gershom Scholem, for whom the value of Hasidism lies precisely in its emphasis on feeling and mystery. It is illuminating when, with a *tzaddik*, there is "a complete irrationalization of religious values [and] he himself becomes Torah." The *tzaddik*-cult may have lent itself to "unlimited emotionalism," but mystery and ecstasy are valid elements in Jewish experience. In these terms we should give up any idea that the sustaining force in Jewish life and thought is its underlying emphasis on the role of reason.

If we turn back to the Gaon, we find him handling the role of mysticism very comfortably within the priority he gave at every point to a consistent theology and the intellectual satisfaction of Talmud study. This must have been true of many talmudists absorbed in Kabbalah—a point brought out very convincingly by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky in his revealing study of the author of the Shulhan Arukh, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*. In general, Werblowsky says, the kabbalists always aimed

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* *The Jews of Poland*, pp. 284-96. See especially Notes 81 and 83, p. 389.

†*History of the Jews (1971)*, Vol. IV, p. 381.

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at drawing *knowledge* out of their ecstasies, and not simply mystical experience. As against Scholem's view that "under the cover of the bewildering and often bizarre theosophical speculations of the kabbalists there hides a genuinely mystical life," Werblowsky argues that to some extent the mystical exercise was just another form of Talmud study. It is fallacious, he says, to set the mystical (and psychical) experiences that were very common among rabbis "over and against the sternly rationalist and moral type of rabbinic piety." We should, rather, envisage "a religious attitude which, far from subscribing to the rationalist denial of mystical phenomena, actually takes them in its stride, as it were, but dismisses them as completely irrelevant to the spiritual life."

Werblowsky justifies this formation in an appendix to his book entitled "The Mystic Life of the Vilna Gaon," in which he presents a remarkable statement of the Gaon uniquely clarifying what seems to lie at the heart of the Litvak heritage. The Gaon, as we know from his disciple Rabbi Chaim of Volozhyn, was not merely a prolific kabbalistic writer but also consciously aware of psychic messages from "mediators" (*maggidim*) and "visitations" from the prophet Elijah, the great mystic Isaac Luria, and others. It seemed to him, he told Rabbi Chaim, that God had provided sleep so that man, while his soul floated in the air, could create insights which he could not obtain "while the soul is joined to the body"; but he made it clear that "knowledge" of this kind, obtained without conscious effort, was not wanted by him:

> I do not want my understanding of the Torah to come through any mediator. . . . My eyes are to God alone: that which He wishes to reveal to me, and the share He wants to give me in His Torah through my hard labor of study—these alone do I desire.

It is a pregnant remark. Man, aware of a sense of reverence and wonder, has to celebrate it in his own freedom. Reason, unique in man, is what God asks of him. We see here no puritanical denial of the power of imagination and poetry, but an ultimate realism that keeps human reason at the center of the experience.

It was not, then, the joyousness or populism of the Hasidim that moved the Gaon to denounce them as "foes of the Jewish people." There was something decisively wrong, for him, in their moral stance. Hasidism, as he saw it, was an abnegation of personal will. Its philosophical assumptions—as expressed, for example, in the near pantheism of Shneur Zalman's book, *Tanya*—not only obscured the separation between a personal Creator and His universe, but also blunted the moral choice for every individual between right and wrong. To surrender decision to the *tzaddik* was as mischievous to doctrine as the superstitious acceptance of his miracle-working power. The responsibilities of life could not be shrugged off by the virtual worship of a new breed of "sacred" men who spoke in parables that were no better, very often, than gobbledygook.

The straight words of the Torah were what mattered; rabbinic study simply spelled them out. In itself, this was a conservative attitude, but in the light of history it became, strangely, a tool of transformation. The revolution in modern Jewish life cannot be understood without it.

THE GAON was living at a time when many, groping for "enlightenment," saw the answer in a straight break with tradition. History proved that this was not how the Jewish people would find their feet in the modern world. For the force in Jewish experience to be "modernized," it had to come to terms with the outside world in a way which left the ancient roots alive and potent.

There was never going to be a straight road to freedom, as Jacob Katz, the frankest historian of Jewish/non-Jewish relations, has shown in *Out of the Ghetto*. The forces both within Jewish life and outside it were powered so much by strong elements of the past that change came only erratically, in ways that constantly defied *a priori* assumptions of rational behavior. On the political front this is now widely understood, particularly in the wake of 20th-century experience at the hands of Germany and Soviet Russia; but it is equally true that among the Jews themselves there could be no simple breaking of the old mold. The most remarkable feature of the 19th-century experience—in the sense of being so unexpected—was not the extent to which the Jews were increasingly "normalized" but rather the way in which they reacted to "freedom" by clinging to their old distinctiveness. As Katz puts it:

> The disintegration that freed Jews from the bonds of traditional society . . . was a dialectical process, which, by its very nature, generated the forces that halted and reversed the tide of dissolution. . . . Jews, having escaped from the traditional Jewish social unit, did not join non-Jewish circles but created new Jewish social entities.

This is a judgment based on the experience of "Western" Jews. Within the Pale, the great masses of Jewry limped along more slowly under the same influences and with infinitely greater persistence of separateness.

Yet it is precisely from this distinctive reservoir of Jewish life that successive generations, as they moved "outside," astonished the world with a talent and vitality that seemed to have been nursed almost by design for a fertile role in Western life, and a role that would remain in some sense identifiably Jewish. It is as if creativity—whether in business, science, or the arts—gained a particular power by having had roots in an authentic social and intellectual background. In some mysterious manner the East European Jew carried the past with him—turning away, *breaking* away, yet

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always impelled to give the past distinctive value.

The most striking example of how this paradoxical process worked is seen in the history of an institution founded six years after the Gaon's death to give expression to his teaching. At Volozhyn, some distance from Vilna, the Gaon's disciple, Rabbi Chaim ben Isaac, set up a yeshivah (rabbinical college) in 1803. Known as *Etz Chaim* in tribute to its founder, Volozhyn became the prototype of all the great talmudic academies of the 19th and 20th centuries. For the first time, the Talmud was studied under a firm routine, replacing the casual attachment to individual rabbis—and the haphazard attempts to live and eat by one's wits—which had been the norm until then. The range of studies was wide, and the standards of scholarship—in the Gaon's tradition—high: but even allowing for this, it is hard at first to see how an institution which was inward-looking by definition could become a force for emancipation. One is much more inclined to see the "modernizing" Haskalah as the true liberating force. Yet if one is looking for the sources of Jewish intellectual achievement in the 20th century, Haskalah and yeshivah have to be seen in balance and interaction.

The aims of Haskalah could be expressed positively. The young were to be brought out of Yiddish into a familiarity with the languages around them. The barriers of the ghetto were to be broken down through apprenticeship to "normal" occupations. Science and the arts were to be opened up. The Jew as "victim" was to be transformed by reaching out to a new sense of independence. In these terms the yeshivah looks medieval. There the students went on, fettered to the old tradition. Chaim Nachman Bialik's epic poem, *Ha-Matmid*, written out of his personal experience of Volozhyn, sums it all up in the mournful drone which he describes rising endlessly from its dismal study-room.

Yet in the same poem, and in the character of Bialik himself, writing almost a century after the foundation of Volozhyn, one can see why a black-and-white contrast between yeshivah and Haskalah is misleading. Throughout the 19th century the Lithuanian yeshivot had apparently ploughed on in isolation from the developing scene; but all this time they were in fact providing a constant stream of fervent intellectual power, a groping toward the world outside in the only terms that could possibly be valid for the great mass of Jews living in that time and place. The yeshivah was like a constantly operating refinery of the intellect, subjecting its raw material to endless processing, spewing out waste and desolation, but with a pure distillation at its heart. The students immured within its walls were in an endless tug-of-war with past and present: the narrower their field of study, the more exciting for some were the prizes and delights that hovered beyond their immediate reach. For some it could lead to rejection of the heritage; for many more, men whose minds were disciplined to the past yet driven also by an intellectual fervor to move into worlds unrealized, it set up a rich counterpoint of dazzling interest.

If one regards this as an expression in some sense of a Litvak heritage, it is not because it remained narrowly localized. The movement of people and ideas was too complex for that, the variety of yeshivot over the whole of Eastern and Central Europe too great. Yet by common consent Volozhyn played a uniquely creative role as a fusing point of rabbinical and Western culture. The Litvak tone had an identifiable resonance, drawing into it, as the century moved on, some particularly liberating qualities that sustained and yet transformed its earlier inspiration.

THE arch-Litvak of our times was undoubtedly Chaim Weizmann, father-figure of the Zionist movement and first President of the State of Israel. He was never himself at a yeshivah, but there was a century of Volozhyn behind him, in which the basically simple qualities expressed in the Gaon had matured slowly into a subtler approach.

Weizmann was an intellectual and a scientist of distinction. The Bible and Jewish history were vibrant in his mind, alive in everything he said. But the special Litvak quality was something one would like to call a healthy form of skepticism. He had faith that being a Jew brought with it a great heritage, but was always ready to question its definition. Irony kept rearing its head.

It may seem odd to speak of irony and skepticism in relation to a man whose whole life communicated idealism and compassion: but this was precisely the combination of qualities that had infused generations of students torn between love of their inheritance and bitterness at what it had produced. Their varied innate talents, turning in many directions in the modern world—business, science, literature, politics—always expressed this underlying conflict. They would never lose the concentration and passion for argument they had imbibed in the yeshivah, but would often think of it with a certain sadness, a feeling that Jewish experience—for all the hold it had on them—was a cloudy story, arousing questions in their minds that God Himself would find hard to answer. It is this feeling which Bialik expressed so movingly in *Ha-Matmid*.

By Bialik's time, the old distinctions had been blurred. He was himself of hasidic stock, and in his youth had read Haskalah literature voraciously. It was in search of a secular education that he enrolled in Volozhyn, having heard, wrongly, that concentration on Talmud was combined with a general study of the humanities. Immersing himself there, he felt grievously disappointed; it was desperately narrow. Yet though his poem recalling these bitter years is a lament for a life lost, it is also a celebration of what was being throttled—a salute to the freedom that Volozhyn seemed able to stimulate in varied forms,

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in his case lyrically, in others with revolutionary power.

The argument of the poem—in marvelously lyrical Hebrew—is the contrast between the fire and brilliance of the young student and "the iron walls, the yellowed pages" that face him in the yeshivah. In protesting, Bialik is freeing himself; but he is celebrating, too, the creative power of this place of "weariness and pain." The yeshivah is "the anvil on which a people's soul is forged." There is a power in those yellow pages that "lights flames of passion in a heart outlived, strikes living sparks in eyes that are extinguished."

No one can doubt that whatever liberation Volozhyn injected, the hasidic child in Bialik was still, in some degree, father to the man. One sees it even more strongly in a very different kind of writer who emerged from Volozhyn, Micha Joseph Berdichevsky—the Nietzsche of Hebrew literature. Born in 1865 of a long line of hasidic rabbis, he too read Haskalah literature deeply in youth, and, like Bialik, enrolled in Volozhyn at the age of twenty-one in the hope of being free to pursue study in all forms, wherever it led. In his case, Volozhyn released an aggressive polemicism that drew strength from every form of contemporary European literature that he could hammer to his purpose. In a vast range of writings—scholarship, folklore, fiction, philosophy—he seemed in some ways to be working for a breaking of the Jewish mold, a transvaluation of values: yet the vehemence of his drive was only the obverse of yeshivah intensity.

What Volozhyn had done was to provide for Berdichevsky, as for countless others, a sense of confidence on which to build. Isolated spirits, groping mostly in the dark, were drawn to something like a university, where ideas could be tested in fellowship. For the ensuing dialectic there had to be a firmly established set of values which one both accepted and fought. This was provided by the inheritance that Volozhyn had come to symbolize—the ultimate respect, generated by the Gaon, for intellectual honesty.

In the Gaon's name, a Litvak today still thinks of himself as a *Mitnagged*, but without too much aggressiveness. It is something to live with but not to die for: the loyalty is fierce, but like that of a Jacobite in modern Scotland rather than a Republican in Northern Ireland. By definition, the Litvak has to have an open mind—to see values even in things which by personal taste are boring, or worse. He likes to think that he is a questioner but not a professional doubter, a reasoner but not a scoffer. In this sense he will admit that Hasidism is not to be shrugged off. It has been fed into the Jewish body politic. It has brought an extra dimension of faith, art, and devotion to the Jewish scene. But is it the lasting force that distinguishes the Jews, keeps them alive, and renews them for the exploration of man's role on earth?

Looking for objectivity on these matters, I turned recently to a long study of the Gaon published by a distinguished historian, Professor Chaim Hillel Ben-Sasson, in the scholarly Hebrew periodical *Zion*.* To Ben-Sasson there is unique distinction in what he calls the *"amor Dei intellectualis* of the Gaon's circle, and the striking intellectualism of the Gaon's personality." He shows that the Gaon did not simply excommunicate the Hasidim *ex cathedra* but presented detailed logical and religious reasons for opposing them. His legacy to the Jewish people, we learn, took two forms of lasting value, both based on the use of reason: the institution of the yeshivah for the elite, and the development of popular instruction through the exposition of the preacher. As a sentimental Litvak, I have tried to broaden this by arguing here that the enduring qualities one would like to see in Jewish life—intelligence, probity, sanity, reliability—emerge most clearly as an echo of the master. Ben-Sasson would seem to agree:

> The image of the Litvak as known in past and in contemporary Jewish folklore was given its shape by the Judaism of Lithuania and White Russia by virtue of tendencies immanent in the Gaon's teachings and by the activities and controversies initiated by his disciples.

This seemed so true to me on reading it that I opened a reference book to see where Professor Ben-Sasson comes from. Without much surprise, I find that he comes from Volozhyn.

* "Personality of the Gaon and his Historical Influence," *Zion* XXXI (1966), pp. 39-86.

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Save Energy, Save a Soul

Eugene Bardach

I OWN a 1961 Buick with a 440-horsepower engine. With its anti-smog device and its large engine, in normal city driving it gets about six miles per gallon. It uses premium-grade gas, which presently sells for about 65 cents per gallon in my city. The fuel cost alone of my daily round trip to my office, which is about a mile and a half from my home, is therefore just over 30 cents. A pity, you might think, that I acquired this gas-guzzling monster in that dim past before the energy crisis struck. I must avow, however, that I bought this car in August 1975.

Despite appearances, my purchase was based on conscious calculation. I intended to use the car almost exclusively for trips back and forth to my office, a level of usage that would bring my annual fuel bill to around $120. I reasoned that no old car in my price range could cut more than $60 off this annual fuel bill and that this car, which was being sold by a long-established service-station owner in my neighborhood, would save in annual repair expenditures more than it would cost in higher outlays for fuel.

If I did what was right for myself, though, did I also do what was right for society? Since everyone who counts seems to agree that as a nation we must conserve energy, I am clearly out of step. But, say I, the appearances are again deceiving. Actually I am aiding the conservation effort: if I did not own this car, whoever owned it in my stead might drive 500 miles per month instead of a mere 100 miles. Although I did not particularly intend to help the energy-conservation effort when I bought the car, I am not unwilling to take credit when it can be had cheaply.

Well, perhaps not so very cheaply, since many people initially regard this line of reasoning as blatant sophistry and condemn me twice over for advancing it. Yet it is correct, at least as far as it goes. There are only two obvious alternatives for the disposition of this ancient Buick: either someone uses it or it goes to the junk heap. Sending it to the junk heap is absurd, however. Can one seriously justify scrapping all that good steel and glass, all those nicely harmonized gears and pistons and valves, in the name of conservation? If not, then someone must use the car, and I am probably the best such someone.

But perhaps the argument does not go far enough. At issue is not merely conservation but *energy* conservation. When pushed to this point, energy conservationists do one of two things. Either they relent and agree that saving the Buick is a lesser evil than scrapping it—even though not an absolute good—or they stand firm and admonish me to drive the car to Mexico, where I should turn it over to a poor rural family that will convert it into a housing unit.

So ardent, then, is the love of certain energy conservationists for BTU's (British Thermal Units) of gasoline and other combustible hydrocarbons. And so great is their distaste for a 1961 Buick. A Buick is only a car, but BTU's are a precious legacy which we must transmit intact to our descendants. A 1961 Buick is a vulgar sort of thing, but BTU's are energy; and energy, as we are told in *A Time to Choose*, the prestigious report of the Ford Foundation Energy Policy Project, "is an integral part of the nation's life-support system."* Use BTU's and you sap the nation's vital bodily fluids.

The only opponents of energy conservation seem to be the companies who are in the energy-supply business. Otherwise, there is not even the usual complement of cranks and reactionaries to hoot the idea down. Almost everyone seems to agree that energy conservation is in principle good. At the same time, however, it appears that everyone also disagrees on how much is enough (or too much), on how we should implement a conservation regime, and on who should bear the costs. In the light of our experience over the last two years, by which we plainly see that such disagreements are acute and possibly irreconcilable, it is worth asking whether energy conservation is actually as good in principle as everyone seems to believe.

I

IF ENERGY CONSERVATION meant doing things which saved money as well as BTU's, and which imposed no added inconven-

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A Time To Choose (Ballinger, 1974), p. 1.

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ience in time or other intangibles, everyone would agree not only on the principle but on the details. Almost surely there are conservation practices which, if undertaken, would make us in at least some few respects better off and in no respects worse off. The most commonly mentioned measures which probably fit this description are better design of new buildings; retrofitted insulation in many old buildings; more efficient space-heating systems; energy-efficiency labeling of appliances; and restoring normal competitive forces in the transportation sector by phasing out government regulation. According to my calculations from the data in *A Time To Choose*, assembled there under the rubric of "Technical Fix," the energy savings from these measures would be about 7 per cent by 1985. That is, we as a nation would be using only about 108 quadrillion BTU's per year ("quads") instead of 116.

Other practices which are recommended for Technical Fix deserve a more skeptical reception. All those pertaining to the industrial sector, for instance, raise the question: if they are so good, why has industry not undertaken them already? If the answer is that the price of energy has historically been too low to make such practices worthwhile, then the past is clearly no guide to the future. Given the prospects of considerably higher energy prices in the future, businessmen should change their ways. If they do not change to more energy-efficient processes in every case, the explanation could lie either in the force of habit or in the fact that the practices alleged to save money as well as energy by the Ford Foundation staff are actually financially unattractive to the businessmen who must bear the costs and risks.

There is no need to be querulous, however. If we can get something for nothing we should find out where and how, and then just do it. The real problems arise when we are asked to exchange something for something, that is, to exchange the costs of energy conservation for the benefits of energy conservation. *A Time To Choose* prompts us to opt for energy-conservation strategies which will achieve Zero Energy Growth (ZEG) beginning in 1985. The strategy involves Technical Fix until 1985, at which time an energy surtax and various direct demand management measures will be brought into play to maintain our society at an annual energy consumption level of about 100 quads indefinitely. Although *A Time To Choose* minimizes the significance of the costs of ZEG, it does not deny they exist. Various critics of the report, including advisory board members to the Energy Policy Project itself, have emphasized these costs. The ZEG scenario, for instance, would shift large numbers of people from automobiles to bicycles and mass transit. It would locate some 17 million people in "new communities" of large multi-family units, the major advantage of which would be reduced commuting distance to places of work. It would encourage vacations closer to home. These do not seem like entirely costless shifts in style of living or in consumption patterns.

A MORE serious question than what the costs might be, however, concerns the prospective benefits of reduced energy consumption. A careful look at the alleged benefits reveals that either they are illusory or else they can be achieved more effectively through other means. Reduced energy consumption might be a by-product of employing these other means, but in no case would it make sense to treat reduced energy consumption either as an end in itself or as the primary instrument of attaining other public purposes.

One alleged benefit of energy conservation is decreased vulnerability to "the oil weapon," that is, an embargo of Arab oil similar to the one we experienced in 1973-74. It is misleading, though, to see this primarily as an energy problem. It is a problem of unreliable supply sources for a critical commodity. In such cases the standard response is to hold unusually large reserves, i.e., a stockpile. Automobile manufacturers, for instance, stockpile steel when they expect a long steelworkers' strike. Coal-burning electric utilities stockpile coal when they anticipate a lengthy coal-miners' strike. We presently hold large stockpiles of certain materials, like aluminum, for military emergency. Thus, stockpiling is a standard protective strategy for any consumer faced with unreliable supply sources, whether the sources be domestic or foreign and no matter the physical nature of the commodity.

No one knows how much oil is presently held as a hedge against an embargo. Private parties have an incentive to conceal such information, since in the event of an embargo there will be strict price controls and a black market to which access will be simpler if government agencies are kept in the dark about the parties' pre-embargo holdings. We can be sure, though, that the present inventories in private hands are not large enough, since the prospect of price ceilings strongly discourages appropriate private hoarding behavior. The Federal Energy Administration, in *Project Independence Blueprint*, estimated that the 1973-74 embargo reduced GNP by $10-20 billion. The FEA further calculated that a one-million-barrel-per-day supply interruption lasting one year could cost the economy about $33 billion and that, given certain cost assumptions for creating and maintaining a stockpile, the nation would be well advised to store enough oil to offset this shortfall if the chances are any more than one-in-five of its occurring in the next ten years. The same basic conclusion is reached by Princeton economist Robert E. Kuenne and his colleagues from the Institute for Defense Analyses in a recent issue of *Policy Analysis*. They recommend a storage program of some

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4.4 billion barrels, to be held mainly in salt domes in the Gulf of Mexico, which would permit a daily draw-down of 4 million barrels over a three-year period. The storage cost would be about 96 cents per barrel per year, or less than 10 per cent of the present OPEC price per barrel.*

Of course, if one is willing to threaten, or actually use, force either to deter an embargo or to terminate it once it is in progress, a much smaller, and correspondingly less expensive, storage program would be optimal. Energy conservation is therefore like the threat of force: it can reduce the size, and therefore the expense, of the optimal stockpile, provided that it is directed specifically at insecure oil imports. Some form of tariff or import quota is the instrument with the required accuracy of aim, however, not energy conservation in general. Once imports are limited, energy conservation, in the sense of reduced consumption, will come about automatically, provided the federal government permits the price mechanism to work unimpeded.

There is no doubt that reduced imports, with or without higher prices, will increase the pressure to develop domestic energy sources. There is also no doubt that such development will have adverse effects on the environment. Preventing or minimizing such effects is another primary objective of the energy-conservation movement.

Some preliminary questions that must be raised in this connection concern the magnitude of the effects and how strongly we wish to avert them. In general, the answers are that, in the realm of conventional fossil fuels, the likely effects will not be as large or as severe as many or most environmentalists seem to fear. Even a dozen large strip-mining operations would be virtually lost in the vast spaces of the Northern Great Plains; the stripped lands can almost always be restored to their original (flat) contours; and perhaps half of these lands (or more) can be successfully revegetated in a five- or ten-year period.† Offshore oil and gas development along most of the East Coast will not affect recreational and aesthetic uses of the coastal zone, since the prospective drilling sites are almost all 50-100 miles from shore. The development will not be visible, and accidental oil spills will almost never reach shore. The environmental outlook for offshore oil and gas development in Alaska is generally less favorable, but only a careful site-by-site analysis will reveal where energy development would entail costs which outweigh the benefits.**

More generally, in the area of fossil-fuels development the interesting decisions are almost always site-specific. This is as true for coal development in Wyoming and Montana or offshore oil on the East or West Coasts as it is for the Alaskan sites. It should be obvious that a generalized policy of promoting energy conservation gives absolutely no guidance on such matters. All it tells us is that, overall and in the long run, energy conservation will permit us to develop fewer such sites than we otherwise would, a virtual truism. As with reducing oil-import vulnerability, the sensible policy would be to focus on the desired level of environmental protection, and if possible on its location as well, and then to let conservation come about as a by-product through a rise in prices. By some perverse illogic, ZEG advocates seem to have made environmental protection into the by-product rather than the objective, and ZEG into the objective rather than the by-product.

The same argument applies with even greater force to policy decisions concerning the management of nuclear-fission technologies. Nuclear power is very worrisome indeed, much more so than conventional fossil fuels. What to do with spent, but still dangerous, nuclear fuels is the outstanding problem, though there are other unresolved questions as well. Reading between the lines, one sees that the authors of *A Time To Choose* are much more concerned about nuclear power than about any or all fossil-fuel developments, and rightly so. If this reading is correct, then one must wonder how ZEG addresses the problem. Technically, a ZEG world dominated by nuclear-fission energy sources is no less conceivable than a ZEG world with no fission reactors at all. Whether we want one or the other or something in between is too important a social decision to be left to the vagaries of a diffuse policy of energy conservation.

THE third popular reason advanced on behalf of energy conservation is that we should protect the welfare of future generations. Fossil fuels are a finite, and hence depletable, resource, the argument runs, so we ought not to squander them on ourselves at the expense of our descendants. Energy conservation will curb our self-indulgence.

This argument is in one sense irrefutable: a BTU of coal, oil, or gas burned up today is burned up forever, and in its raw form it is absolutely unavailable to our descendants. However, we would probably injure rather than benefit our descendants by transmitting these BTU's in raw form rather than in the form of capital equipment, which is at least one other form that BTU's can take. All other things being equal, capital is better, since it embodies not only energy but materials and labor and technology. On the other hand, it

* Robert E. Kuenne, Gerald F. Higgins, Robert J. Michaels, and Mary Summerfield, "A Policy to Protect the U.S. Against Oil Embargoes," *Policy Analysis*, Fall 1975, pp. 571-97.

† Northern Great Plains Resources Program, "Effects of Coal Development in the Northern Great Plains," U.S. Government Printing Office, April 1975.

** U.S. Department of Interior, "Final Environmental Statement: Proposed Increase in Oil and Gas Leasing in the Outer Continental Shelf," July 1975.

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is obvious that the majority of BTU's used in any time period are allocated to consumption rather than to capital formation. Is there reason to think that this allocation is inequitable, that it is tipped too much in favor of consumption at the expense of capital?

I suspect not, although this is frankly a question to which no one has a definite answer. The first point to note, though, is that at least since the beginnings of capitalism each generation has been, on the average, better off than its immediate predecessor, largely because it has inherited its predecessors' accumulated capital stock. If this process continues, regardless of the inter-generational distribution of fossil-fuel stocks, our descendants will owe us a debt rather than vice versa. If the process does not continue, on the other hand, the distribution of fossil-fuel stocks might have little to do with the fact. The idea of "capital stock" in this context is quite inclusive. It embraces knowledge, for example, and the capacity to transmit and increase knowledge. If the scholastic-aptitude-tests are any indication, each annual cohort of high-school graduates for the last twelve years has been less talented than its predecessor. In the final analysis, we may be sapping the welfare of future generations far more by our failing to replenish the talent pool than by our depleting the world pool of oil.

In any case, even if the depletion of the fossil-fuel stock is proceeding too rapidly, from the point of view of subsequent generations, energy conservation is not much of a solution. The solution is research and development. Ultimately, a technological breakthrough will be necessary, probably either in solar energy or in hydrogen-fusion technologies. If it does come, all the present talk of energy conservation will be seen as a historical curiosity. If it does not, energy prices will rise slowly to reflect fossil-fuel scarcities and the high cost of solar and other technologies. High prices will enforce a stern discipline on all users of energy and in that case too the present rhetoric about our "responsibility" to conserve energy will appear to have been irrelevant.

To sum up, then, energy conservation is a very blunt policy instrument when it comes to reducing our import vulnerability, protecting the environment, or transmitting an equitable stock of worldly wealth to succeeding generations. Although higher energy prices and reduced energy consumption may be a natural by-product of whatever we do to solve these problems, energy conservation is in no case the best strategy with which to approach them. Indeed, one ought to fear that the rhetoric of energy conservation might divert intellectual and political energy from real problems with real —and difficult—solutions. Most people find it easier and more entertaining to make up policies concerning the disposition of my 1961 Buick than to press for an adequate stockpile of crude oil in Gulf of Mexico salt domes or to argue for reasonable limitations on the growth of nuclear power.

II

IF ENERGY conservation cannot be justified on practical grounds, how explain its great popularity as a political rallying cry?

It is bold, it is comprehensive, it attacks many problems, and it seems to attack them root and branch. To brandish the sword of energy conservation is figuratively if not literally heroic. To ride a bicycle to work in the name of conservation is to place oneself in the tradition of Achilles, Hector, and Beowulf. Indeed, the energy conservationist reaches back to the heroic archetype, Prometheus—only in this case the aim is to take fire away from mankind rather than to bestow it. Hence the energy conservationist can burn with atavistic heroic ardor while at the same time moving comfortably within the anti-heroic tradition of modernism.

Like all heroes, the energy conservationist is doomed to become entangled in a web of troubles spun partly by himself. Once bewitched by the spell of a grand design, like energy conservation, it is almost impossible to back away and look forthrightly at the concrete problems for which it is alleged as a remedy. These too fall under the spell. A grand design, after all, requires a grand problem of which it can be worthy. Thus, in place of diverse problems with diverse names—oil-import vulnerability, environmental degradation, inequitable wealth transfers to future generations—we get the single great woe, "the energy crisis." Once the talisman of energy conservation is in hand it creates and sustains the necessary demonology. If energy conservation is initially appealing because it is so bold, it retains its appeal because its very boldness dissolves the critical mind-set which might challenge its validity.

For those who disapprove of Western, and particularly American, bourgeois materialism, energy conservation is the ultimate rhetorical weapon. "Consumption," Hannah Arendt warned in *The Human Condition,* "harbors the grave danger that eventually no object of the world will be safe from . . . annihilation. . . ." That warning came almost twenty years ago, and it may not have been clear then precisely what annihilation implied. Now it is clear: one day there will be an end to fossil fuels.

Being a natural resource, fossil fuels appear to give us something for nothing. Fossil fuels belong to the sun, not to man, and by using them we inevitably presume on the benevolence of powers not our own. The bourgeoisie has always done so, of course, and has always been despised for it by the aristocratic class and by intellectuals. First there was machinery. Then there was the economic dividend provided by the division of labor.

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Next there was the capitalist miracle of compound interest. Yet the problem with attacking any or all of these wealth-increasing powers has been that defenders of the bourgeois order could argue that something for nothing was actually a good deal, and that even if the social cost were not literally zero, on balance and in the long run, it was fairly low. Now, however, the critics of the bourgeois order have an unassailable argument: gains to man are won directly at the expense of nature. Contemporary man's idle pleasures are made possible only by exploiting nature's eons-long frugality. The popular flavor of the argument is evident in the recent campaign literature of the energy conservationists' favorite presidential candidate, Congressman Morris Udall:

> No longer can we continue our blatant waste of the world's limited supply of raw materials. Conspicuous consumption must be eliminated from our lives, if we are to survive the long haul.
>
> No longer can we as a nation afford the energy waste of gas-guzzling automobiles and meaningless mobility.
>
> No longer can we overindulge ourselves with frivolous electrical appliances and gadgets cluttering up our kitchen counter-tops and our homes.
>
> No longer can we rape the land and our environment to satisfy unlimited greed and desire for luxury.

Two years ago, if someone had asked how government might proceed to wage war on materialism and to alter the style of living of millions of Americans, I certainly would have been unable to propose a policy instrument. Suddenly, the instrument appears to be at hand. Not surprisingly, energy conservationists are divided, or perhaps ambivalent, on the desirability of using this instrument for such ends. Congressman Udall is unusually forthright on the issue. *A Time To Choose*, however, may be more representative. On the one hand, the authors tell us that ZEG will not force us to skimp on amenities and that it will permit more material prosperity than the country now enjoys. On the other hand, we are also told that one of the reasons for limiting energy growth is that "American society has concentrated too much on making and acquiring ever greater quantities of goods and has neglected the community and non-material needs of people." The sometimes hidden agenda of the energy conservationists may not be more important to them than the public agenda, e.g., environmental protection, but it is the only agenda for which the favored solution is particularly relevant.

The psychological force of the energy conservationists' argument is remarkable. There is no getting around it, burning up the BTU's in a gallon of gasoline burns them up forever. They cannot be retrieved, reconstructed, recycled, or renovated. They are destroyed, and we are the agents of their destruction. Eloquent testimony about the deep reservoirs of guilt tapped by this fact is to be found in a letter by "a housewife and artist" published last winter in the New York *Times Magazine*. She rides a bicycle, keeps the heat down to 65 degrees, composts the family food scraps, saves newspapers, and has only two children. Still it is not enough:

> After all my efforts, I began to realize that to be alive now is to be guilty of shortening mankind's existence. I can't buy bread in a plastic bag, eat a hamburger, wear knit pants, or flush a toilet without being guilty of consuming some product that is either deadly to life's long-range continuance or in diminishing supply. So, I must cope with my individual guilt as a modern consumer, or run naked into the woods and starve.
>
> To assuage my guilt I have decided to conserve as much as physically possible, to use resources and technology efficiently, and to enrich life now by creating works of art. What more can I do?

Guilt is not the only psychological condition to which the doctrine of energy conservation speaks so compellingly. There are also infantile feelings of dependency. Energy is Mother Nature's milk for our industrial society. As consumers, we sense that it comes into our homes and automobiles virtually on demand. If it stops or slows down, we do not regard it as a problem of mere supply shortages or high prices—which could, after all, happen to any "ordinary" commodity—we see it as an ominous deprivation. We become petulant and demand of Father Government that he take the Mean Uncle oil companies in hand and stop them from interfering with Mother Nature's bounteous flow.

But one need not speculate about infantile needs to recognize that energy is a highly charged psychological symbol. An "integral part of the nation's life-support system," says *A Time To Choose*. "Why should we mine coal in Montana, or drill for oil in Alaska, to keep the lights on in Tokyo?" is a favorite question of energy conservationists. The ultra-nationalism, and perhaps even racism, implied by such a question is normally not at all recognized, so powerful is the conception of coal and oil as some of the nation's vital signs. That the Japanese in exchange for our coal and oil will return to us radios and cameras and (very energy-efficient) automobiles seems like a contemptible answer.

FRUGALITY and self-sufficiency are values defined by the exoteric doctrines of the energy-conservation movement. The movement has its esoteric side as well, however, with a special sort of fascination. It is a recurring disease of intellectuals to believe that there is a strong

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causal connection between social theory and social fact. The notion is that a great social transformation must be accompanied, if not always preceded, by a conceptual or theoretical breakthrough. Conversely, the conceptual breakthrough induces or speeds great social changes. The theoretical vanguard of the energy-conservation movement is presently at work developing what might be called the BTU theory of value. Eventually this theory will go the same way as the labor theory of value, but in the meantime it is capable of doing much mischief.

In its simplest form, the BTU theory of value holds that all human actions should be measured in terms of how much energy they require and that, for roughly equivalent actions, that action is to be preferred which requires less energy. Hence, mass transit is to be preferred to the private automobile, high-density residential development to low-density development, and aluminum to steel in automobile construction.

The first problem with the theory is that roughly equivalent actions are not really equivalent. Mass transit, for instance, in many cases gives a lower quality of service than the private automobile. If the levels of service (convenience, reliability, comfort, etc.) were identical, then the mass-transit system would probably be prohibitively expensive. Herein lies the second, and more telling problem with the theory, namely, that energy is only one of many inputs into producing a good or service. To choose a production process on this basis alone is in effect to assume that, for each of the alternative processes being considered, all the other inputs are of exactly equal value.

Put this way, the theory is obviously untenable, but the scientific vanguard among the theoreticians has a solution: convert *all* inputs into BTU's and then choose the process with the lowest BTU consumption. This procedure is of course exceedingly complicated in practice. Although one can come up with BTU values for aluminum ingot, cement casing, and the like, it is a laborious task to estimate for any given process the relevant physical parameters of all the materials to which the appropriate BTU conversion factors are to be applied. The main difficulty is conceptual rather than practical, however, and the main conceptual difficulty is that some energy comes from the sun, which is free, while some energy comes from fossil fuels, which are not free. Energy which is free must either be excluded from the calculations or given some arbitrary value. It is no surprise that the theorists are in their greatest quandary about how to put a BTU value on human labor, which is ultimately nourished and sustained by crops and animals drawing on the sun's free energy. Even those who are willing to put some BTU value on labor are unable to differentiate between the BTU value of an unskilled worker and that of a brilliant engineer.

The most bizarre results of the BTU theory of value are evident when the theorists talk about energy-development policies. Do not develop an energy source, the argument runs, unless it will yield more energy than is consumed in developing it. This is the "net-energy-yield" test. It sounds plausible until one remembers that, given the second law of thermodynamics, every human action *except* developing energy resources represents a net energy loss for mankind. If the net-energy-yield test were to be applied more generally, we ought all to go immediately into rigor mortis, or at least assume the lotus position for hours on end. Why a social decision rule which gives preposterous results for any development decision outside the energy field, like building a ship or rehabilitating a slum or opening a copper mine, should make any more sense when it comes to digging coal or pumping oil is unfathomable.

Naturally, the BTU theory of value finds its most receptive audience among scientists. *Science* magazine recently published an article on the subject to which the editors gave the flattering subhead, "The energy unit measures environmental consequences, economic costs, material needs, and resource availability."* The National Science Foundation Office of Energy Policy and the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA), both dominated by physical scientists, have taken steps to promote the BTU theory of value. It is easy to see why physical scientists should feel a significant emotional and intellectual affinity with a theory grounded in physical reality. In addition they are likely to welcome the BTU theory as a relief from the awful relativism with which conventional economics treats the matter of values. A final reason the theory is favored by physical scientists, and the one with the greatest explanatory power, I believe, is political. If the BTU theory of value is mishmash, it is at least scientifically esoteric mishmash. If we are ever so unfortunate as to have serious social decisions made using the BTU theory of value, it will almost surely be the physical scientists who dominate the political dialogue.

III

In sum, then, energy conservation is a popular political rallying cry not because of its intrinsic merit as an instrument of public policy but because it expresses the anti-bourgeois ideology of the dominant intellectual class and because it has a ring of rational self-sacrifice which alleviates great psychologial distress experienced by large segments of the public. As the BTU theory of value evolves into the movement's esoteric doctrine, the ability of ordinary

* Martha W. Gilliland, "Energy Analysis and Public Policy," September 26, 1975, pp. 1051-56.

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people to pierce the veil of ideology and see that little or nothing lies behind it is likely to diminish even further.

Energy conservation is a solution in search of a problem. The problems it purports to solve are best addressed by other means. Our oil-import vulnerability should be dealt with by a combination of stockpiling, import quotas, and the threat of forceful intervention. Environmental degradation may be prevented by legal and administrative regulation and by appropriately scaled pollution taxes. Assuring energy for future generations requires a technological solution. The likelihood of finding such a solution will be determined by luck and skill, but the urgency with which it is sought will be powerfully determined by the actuality and the expectation of rising energy prices. By saving energy we can perhaps save our souls, but not much else.

IT IS very likely that reduced energy consumption will be a natural consequence of implementing most of the proposed solutions to these three problems. It is likely but not inevitable. If prices go up and we consume less than we otherwise would have, no great catastrophe will occur. The energy conservationists are right about that. On the other hand, we might be able to have our cake and eat it too. Everyone would be happy with that outcome except those energy conservationists who regard reduced consumption as an end in itself. At the present time, unfortunately, that description seems to fit a very large number of them.

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Biblical Narrative

Robert Alter

In a previous article in these pages, "A Literary Approach to the Bible,"* I wrote about the general paucity of serious literary analysis of the Bible in contemporary scholarship, and about the difficulties that confront the critic in trying to understand and explicate the biblical text in literary terms. What I should like to do here is to extend that discussion by looking closely at one aspect of the literary art of the Bible, the use of repetition in narrative. As before, my effort will be to show how the critical application of literary scholarship can result in a deeper appreciation of the Bible not only as a work of literature, but as a religious document as well.

One of the most imposing barriers that stands between the modern reader and the imaginative subtlety of biblical narrative is the extraordinary prominence of verbatim repetition. This habit of constantly restating material is bound to give us trouble, especially in a narrative that otherwise adheres so evidently to the strictest economy of means. Repetition is, I would guess, the feature of biblical narrative that looks most "primitive" to the casual modern eye, reflecting a mentality alien to our own and a radically different approach to ordering experience from the ones familiar to us.

In the more leisurely, simpler life-rhythms of the ancient Near East, so it would seem, every instruction, every prediction, every reported action had to be repeated word for word in an inexorable literalism as it was obeyed, fulfilled, or reported to another party. Perhaps, some have impressionistically conjectured, there is an "Oriental" sense of the intrinsic pleasingness of repetition in the underlying aesthetic of the Bible, a delight on the part of the writer and his audience in the very mechanism of patient repetition. Thinking in somewhat more concrete historical terms, commentators have attributed the repetitive features of biblical narrative to its oral origins, to the background of folklore from which it draws, and to the composite nature of the text that has been transmitted to us.

The last of these three explanations is the least interesting and finally accounts for the smallest number of cases. There are occasional verses repeated out of scribal error, but under scrutiny most instances of repetition prove to be quite purposeful, and this would include not only the repetition of relatively brief statements but of whole episodes presumably compiled from parallel traditions.

The notion of folklore covers a little more ground, though I think it is rarely the sufficient explanation for the occurrence of repetition that its more programmatic advocates imagine it to be. One of the infrequent cases in which repetition would appear to serve a primarily folkloric function is the presence of two competing etiological tales, both of which seem to have demanded representation in the text as explanations of the same fact. (Thus, to account for a current folk-saying, "Is Saul, too, among the prophets?," two different stories are reported of his meeting a company of prophets and joining them in manic ecstasy.) More commonly the background of folklore is perceptible not so much in the specific material repeated as in the form the repetition assumes, the structure of the tale. Again and again one finds biblical stories cast in the familiar folktale form of incident, repetition, second repetition with variations or reversal (a form we all know from fairy-tales like "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" or "Rumpelstiltskin"). At times, this pattern is followed with schematic simplicity, and in such cases folkloric practice may well be an adequate explanation of the repetitions. Elsewhere, as we shall have occasion to observe, the one-two-three-change structure of folktale repetition is reshaped with conscious artistry.

Finally, the Bible's repetitive mode of exposition has been explained by reference to the oral context of biblical narrative. One does not necessarily have to assume, as some scholars have plausibly proposed, that the biblical narratives derive from long-standing oral traditions; for in any case it is altogether likely that they were written chiefly for oral absorption. As several indications in the Bible itself suggest, the narratives would typically have been read out from a scroll to some sort of assembled audience (many of whom would presumably not have been literate) rather than passed around to be read in our sense. The unrolling scroll, then, was in one respect like the unrolling spool of a film projector, for time and the sequence of events presented in it could not or-

* December 1975.

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dinarily be halted or altered, and the only convenient way of fixing a particular action or statement for special inspection was by repeating it.

The necessities of oral delivery can be imagined in still simpler terms. If you were a Judean herdsman standing in the outer circle of listeners while the story of the Ten Plagues was being read, you might miss a few phrases when God instructs Moses about turning the Nile into blood (Exodus 7:17-18), but you could easily pick up what you had lost when the instructions were almost immediately repeated verbatim as narrated action (verses 20-21). If you were close enough to the reader to catch every word, you could still enjoy the satisfaction of hearing each individual term of God's grim prediction, first stated in the prophetic future, then restated as accomplished fact, with an occasional elegant variation of the verbatim repetition through the substitution of a synonym (in verse 18 the Egyptians are unable to drink the water, *nil'u lishtot*; in verse 21, they cannot drink, *lo-yakhlu lishtot*). Here, as elsewhere, the solution to what one infers were the physical difficulties of delivering the story orally jibes perfectly with the vision of history that informs the story; for biblical narrative, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Chronicles, is an account of how divine word—and in more ambiguous ways, often human word as well—becomes historical fact. The constantly reiterated pattern, then, of command or prophecy closely followed by its verbatim fulfillment confirms an underlying view of historical causality, translates into a central narrative device the unswerving authority of a monotheistic God manifesting Himself in language.

Up to this point, it may seem as though I have been assuming an absolute distinctiveness in the Bible's use of repetition. This could hardly be the case, since at least some parts of a whole spectrum of repetitive devices are bound to be present wherever there is pattern in narration, from Homer to Günter Grass. Certain characteristic biblical uses of repetition closely resemble the kinds of repetition that are familiar artistic devices in short stories and novels, dramatic and epic poems, written elsewhere and later. *King Lear* can serve as an analogue because it is a work that makes spectacularly brilliant use of a wide range of repetitive devices, and these have been conveniently classified by Bruce F. Kawin in *Telling It Again and Again: Repetition in Literature and Film.** The most obvious and general kind of repetition in *Lear* is situational rather than literal, particularly embodied in the multiple parallels of the double plot. The Bible does not employ symmetrical double plots, but it constantly insists on parallels of situations and reiterations of motif that provide moral and psychological commentary on each other (like the chain of sibling struggles, the displacement of the elder by the younger, in Genesis). Since the use of such parallels and recurrent motifs is ubiquitous in narrative literature, there is no special need here to elucidate its presence in the Bible, though it is an aspect of the biblical tale that always needs careful scrutiny.

At the other end of the spectrum of repetition in *Lear* is the reiteration of the same word in unbroken sequence (like the mad Lear's "Kill, kill, kill, kill. . . ." or Lear's "Never, never, never, never, never" over the body of Cordelia)—what Kawin aptly describes as "a syntax of pure emphasis." This extreme possibility of repetition, where the device has a totally dramatic justification as the expression of a kind of mental stammer, is bound to be relatively rare, especially in nondramatic literature, but it does occur occasionally in the Bible, most memorably when David is informed of Absalom's death (2 Samuel 19). The poet-king, who elsewhere responds to the report of deaths with eloquent elegies, here simply sobs, "Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son," repeating "my son" eight times in two verses.

More pervasively, one discovers in *Lear*, as in so many plays and novels, a repetition of certain key words (like the verb "crack") that become thematic ideas through their recurrence at different junctures, carrying, as Kawin puts it, "the meanings they have acquired in earlier contexts with them into their present and future contexts, immensely complicating and interrelating the concerns and actions of the play." Precisely this kind of word-motif, as a good many commentators have recognized, is one of the most common features of the narrative art of the Bible. It often functions within a single episode as the chief means of thematic exposition within the limited unit. The confrontation, for example, between Samuel and Saul over the king's failure to destroy all of the Amalekites and their possessions (1 Samuel 15), is woven out of a series of variations on the key terms *listen, voice, word.* Samuel begins by enjoining Saul to listen to the voice of God; when the king returns victorious from battle, the prophet is dismayed by the voice (or sound, *qol*) of sheep and the voice of cattle that he hears; thundering denunciation in verse, he tells Saul that what the Lord wants is "Listening to the voice of God,/ For to listen is better than sacrifice,/ To hearken, than the fat of rams"; and a contrite Saul apologizes that he has transgressed the word of the Lord and instead listened to the voice of the people (*vox populi* being here the thematic opposite of *vox dei*).

The characteristic biblical strategy, as in this chapter of Samuel, is to call explicit attention to the verbal repetition, but there are also numerous instances in which repetition becomes a Jamesian figure in the carpet, half-hidden, subliminally insistent, in the manner most congenial to modern

* Cornell University Press, 197 pp., $7.50.

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literary sensibilities. Samson, for example, is quietly but effectively associated with a verbal and imagistic motif of fire (Judges 14-16). The various cords that fail to bind him are likened to flax dissolving in fire when he snaps them with his strength. The thirty Philistine men threaten his first wife with death by fire if she does not obtain for them the answer to Samson's riddle. When Samson is discarded as a husband by the action of his first father-in-law, he responds by tying torches to the tails of foxes and setting the Philistine fields on fire. The immediate reaction of the Philistines is to make a roaring bonfire out of the household of Samson's recent wife, with her and her father in the midst of the flames. By the time we get to the captive Samson bringing down the temple of Dagon on himself and several thousand of his enemies, though there is no actual fire in this climactic scene, fire has become a metonymic image of Samson himself: a figure of blind, uncontrollable force, leaving a terrible swath of destruction behind it, finally consuming itself together with whatever stands in its way.

Word-motifs are most characteristically used, however, in larger narrative units, to sustain a thematic development and to establish instructive connections between seemingly disparate episodes. Michael Fishbane, in a recent article, has convincingly argued that the entire cycle of tales about Jacob is structured through the reiteration of word-motifs and themes as a series of "symmetrical framings" which "reflect a considered technique of composition."* The two most decisive words for the organization of this material in Genesis are *blessing* and *birthright* (in Hebrew a pun, *berakhah* and *bekhorah*). These key words, supported by a whole set of subsidiary word-motifs, mark the connections between thematically parallel narrative units, creating "a formal structure of inclusions and order which stand in ironic contrast to the machinations of the content."

This sort of literary mechanism, at once a unifying device and a focus of development in the narrative, should be understandable enough to anyone familiar with, say, Shakespeare's elaboration of the multiple implications of the word *time* in *Henry IV*, Part 1, or with Fielding's multifariously ironic treatment of *prudence* in *Tom Jones*, or, in a more musically formal deployment, Joyce's conjuring with *yes* in Molly Bloom's soliloquy. The uses of repetition, then, which we have been reviewing are shared by the Bible with other kinds of narrative literature. What most distinguishes repetition in biblical narrative is the explicitness and formality with which it is generally employed, qualities that, to return to our initial difficulty, support an unusual proportion of verbatim restatement. In order to appreciate the artfulness of this kind of repetition, a modern reader has to cultivate the complementary opposite of the habits of perception he most frequently puts to use in his reading. That is, in narratives where there is a great density of specified fictional data and some commitment to making the mimetic elements of style and structure more prominent than the poetic ones, repetition tends to be at least partly camouflaged, and we are expected to *detect* it, to pick it out as a subtle thread of recurrence in a variegated pattern, a flash of suggestive likeness in seeming differences. (The obvious exception to this tendency in Western literature would be extreme fictional experiments in stylization, like those of Gertrude Stein or Alain Robbe-Grillet, where repetition becomes an obtrusive structural device.) When, on the other hand, you are confronted with an extremely spare narrative, marked by formal symmetries, which exhibits a high degree of literal repetition, what you have to look for more frequently is the small but revealing differences in the seeming similarities, the nodes of emergent new meanings in the pattern of regular expectations created by explicit repetition.

How this actually works will become clear, I hope, through some examples. Broadly, when repetitions with significant variations occur in biblical narrative, the changes introduced can point to an intensification, climactic development, acceleration of the actions and attitudes initially represented, or, on the other hand, to some unexpected, perhaps unsettling, new revelation of character or plot.

The former category is the simpler of the two, related as it is to the device of incremental repetition we might expect in an ancient narrative. Thus, in 1 Kings 1, after Adonijah has laid claim to the throne, Nathan the prophet gives the following advice to Bathsheba: "Go to King David and say to him—My lord king, did you not swear to your handmaid in these words: 'Solomon your son will reign after me and he will sit on my throne?' Then why has Adonijah become king?" Nathan goes on to assure Bathsheba that he will make his entrance while she is still speaking to David and will fill in—that is literally the verb he uses—whatever she has left unsaid. Now, one of the intriguing aspects of this whole story—for the omissions of biblical narrative are as cunning as its repetitions—is that we have no way of knowing whether David in fact made such a pledge in favor of Solomon or whether it is a "pious" fraud that Nathan and Bathsheba are foisting on the old and failing king, who hardly seems to know at this point what is happening around him.

Bathsheba carries out her instructions, addressing these words to David:

> "My lord, you swore by the Lord your God to your handmaid, 'Solomon your son will reign after me and he will sit on my throne.' But now Adonijah has become king, without, my lord king, your knowing. He has slaughtered an

* "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, XXVII, 1-2, Spring-Autumn 1975.

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abundance of oxen, fatlings, and sheep, inviting all the sons of the king and Abiathar the priest and Joab the general of the army, but Solomon your servant he did not invite. You, my lord king, the eyes of all Israel are upon you to tell them who will sit on the throne of my lord king after him. For when my lord king lies with his forefathers, I and my son Solomon will be held guilty."

It is a brilliant speech, Bathsheba repeating the lines Nathan has given her but also expanding them with the most persuasive inventiveness. The two-word indication, *malakh Adoniyahu*, Adonijah has become king, blossoms out into her review of the usurper's invitation-list for his feast, her description of all Israel waiting breathlessly for the king's pronouncement, and her pathetic evocation of the fate that will soon attend her and her son if David fails to act. Even in what she repeats verbatim from Nathan's instructions, she introduces one small but revealing addition: she claims that David swore to her about Solomon's succession "by the Lord [his] God," which would indicate a higher order of binding solemnity to the vow. Perhaps Nathan as a man of God was nervous about taking His name in vain (especially, of course, if the whole idea of the pledge was a hoax) and so omitted that phrase from his instructions. David, carrying this particular incremental repetition a half-step further, will announce to Bathsheba after he has been persuaded by her and Nathan that he did make such a vow, "As I swore to you by the Lord God of Israel, 'Solomon your son will reign after me . . . ,'" giving the solemn vow the concluding flourish of an official proclamation.

Nathan, faithful to the scenario he has sketched out, enters just at the point when Bathsheba has conjured up her prospective plight after David's demise. Shrewdly, since he would not be presumed to know of a pledge given by David directly to Bathsheba, he takes the precise verbal formulas of the supposed vow (which he has in fact just dictated to Bathsheba) and turns them into a barbed question about Adonijah: "My lord king, did you say, 'Adonijah will reign after me and he will sit on my throne'?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he plunges into an account of the usurper's politically designing feast in which, following the pattern of incremental repetition, some pointed details appear that were not present in Bathsheba's version:

"For today he went down to slaughter an abundance of oxen, fatlings, and sheep, inviting all the sons of the king and the generals of the army and Abiathar the priest, and there they are eating and drinking in his presence, and they have proclaimed, 'Long live King Adonijah.' But me, your servant, and Zadok the priest and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and Solomon, your servant, he did not invite."

The differences between Nathan's version and Bathsheba's version are wonderfully in character for both. Bathsheba's presentation reveals the distressed mother and suppliant wife emphasizing the injustice done to her son, the imminent danger threatening mother and son, the absolute dependence of the nation on the powerful word of the king. Nathan, by what he adds, sharpens the more general political aspects of the threat from Adonijah. In his repetition of the shared script, it is not just Joab but the whole military elite that has been suborned by the pretender, and he has a fuller list of David's faithful who have been set aside by Adonijah, beginning emphatically with "me, your servant" (Bathsheba prudently left Nathan out of her account), a symmetrical counterpart to "Solomon, your servant" at the end of the series. Most crucially, Nathan adds a little vignette of Adonijah's company eating and drinking and shouting "Long live King Adonijah," a scene certainly calculated to rouse the ire of the still reigning king. In tactful contrast to the usurper's followers, Bathsheba at the end of this meeting will say to the aged monarch, "May my lord King David live forever."

The effect of this whole process of repeating and adding is to overwhelm David with a crescendo of arguments. Incremental repetition, which in its more schematic usages simply provides a progressive intensification or elaboration of an initial statement, here has the fullest dramatic and psychological justification. It conveys, without the need for explicit commentary, aspects of the distinctive character of each of the personages involved in the scene, and it becomes as well a convincingly effective means of bringing about a change in the course of events—for here as elsewhere in the Bible, language manifestly makes things happen.*

VARIATION in repetition is sometimes used to adumbrate not a feature of character but a development of plot. The effect this produces is thoroughly characteristic of the Bible's narrative art. In the kind of foreshadowing we are more accustomed to, an eventual denouement is anticipated by some momentary insistence of action, image, or narrator's assertion. Julien Sorel near the beginning of *The Red and the Black* enters a church where he finds a scrap of printed paper reporting the execution of one Louis Jenrel, the anagram of his own name, and as he leaves, the sunlight coming through the red curtains makes the holy water look like blood—a tremolo note typical of the convention of foreshadowing but, fortunately, not of Stendhal's

* It is characteristic of conventional Bible scholarship that an excellent historical-philological commentary on Kings, that of John Gray (Westminster Press, 1963), should note the frequent repetitions here, cite as a parallel the Ras Shamra myths, and then say nothing more than, "Such repetition is of course a feature of popular narrative and is found in ballad literature."

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novels. In the Bible, on the other hand, terse understatement remains the norm, and future turns of events are adumbrated by the slight disturbing dissonance produced when in a pattern of repetition some ambiguous phrase is substituted for a more reassuring one. What is conveyed to the reader is a subliminal intimation of things to come rather than some emphatic though obscure warning.

When, for example, Manoa's wife (Judges 13) is told by the angel that she will conceive and bear a son, she repeats almost all the terms of the divine promise word for word to her husband, but she significantly changes the final phrase of the annunciation. The angel had said, "The lad will be a Nazarene to God from the womb, and he will begin to save Israel from the Philistines." In her repetition, the future mother of Samson concludes, "The lad will be a Nazarene to God from the womb to the day of his death." It is surely a little unsettling that the promise which ended with the liberation—though, pointedly, only the *beginning* of liberation—of Israel from its Philistine oppressors now concludes with no mention of "salvation" but instead with the word "death." From the womb to the day of death is, of course, a proverbial and neutral way of saying "all his life." In context, however, the woman's silence on the explicit promise of political salvation and the counterpoising of the three-word phrase, *ad-yom moto*, to the day of his death, against the echo of the whole clause on the lad's career as a liberator, turn the substituted phrase into an implicit commentary on the prophecy and restore to that final "death" a hint of its independent negative force. The absence of salvation in the wife's version would seem to be underscored when Manoa subsequently questions the angel about "what will be the regimen for the lad and his deeds." The angel, after all, has already given the answer to both parts of the question in his words to Manoa's wife, but the crucial information about the child's future deeds was deleted from her report to Manoa. In sum, the dissonance of a single phrase subtly sets the scene for a powerful but spiritually dubious savior of Israel who will end up sowing as much destruction as salvation.

Let me offer one more example of varied repetition as a foreshadowing device because, occurring at a moment of much greater narrative suspense, it illustrates how the folktale pattern of a whole series of exact repetitions concluded by a reversal can be employed with considerable artistic sophistication. In 2 Samuel 3, Abner, Saul's commander-in-chief, decides to end the long civil war with the house of David and comes to David's capital at Hebron to confer with the warrior-king. After a feast and an amicable discussion in which Abner pledges to win over all his people to the signing of a treaty and the recognition of David as king,

> David sent Abner off and he went in peace [*vayelekh beshalom*]. And here were David's retainers and Joab coming back from a sortie bringing much booty with them, and Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him off and he went in peace. As Joab and the troops with him returned, Joab was told the following: "Abner came to the king, and he sent him off and he went in peace." Joab came to the king and said: "What have you done? Here, Abner came to you, why did you send him off and he went indeed [*vayelekh halokh*]?"

After three occurrences in rapid succession of a departure in peace, Joab's substitution of an intensifying infinitive, *halokh*, for *beshalom*, in peace, falls like the clatter of a dagger after the ringing of bells. Joab says "he went indeed" partly because he is seething with anger at the thought that David actually let Abner go off when he had him in his hands, partly because his own steely intention is to make sure that this going off will not be in peace. Joab quickly proceeds to berate David for giving aid and comfort to the enemy who could have come only to spy, then he rushes off messengers to call Abner back to Hebron; and, when he returns, this toughest of ancient Near Eastern *mafiosi*, drawing Abner over to the city gate, stabs him to death, thus avenging his brother Asael killed in battle by Abner. By the time we arrive at the rapid denouement of the episode, we may even wonder retrospectively whether the breaking of the series of repetitions with the infinitive of the verb "to go" was not merely to intensify the meaning of the verb but to call attention to its possible application by Abner in another sense—as a euphemism for death. (For some indication that this secondary meaning was current in biblical usage, see Job 27:21 and Jeremiah 22:10.) In any case, it should be clear that in order to grasp the full freight of the character's intention and the subtlety of narrative structure in such a story, one must be alert even to the shift of a single word in what may first seem a strictly formulaic pattern.

Having surveyed some varieties of artful repetition, I would like to offer a more elaborate illustration in which a carefully orchestrated ensemble of repetitive devices provides the complex structure for an entire story. My example, the story of Balaam, the Gentile prophet (Numbers 22:2 to 24:25), is unfortunately too long to comment on here verse by verse, but I shall try to show how it works through a summary analysis.

The very first word in the Hebrew of the Balaam story is the verb *to see* (22:2), which appropriately becomes, with some synonyms, the main word-motif in this tale about the nature of prophecy or vision. First Balak, king of Moab, sees what Israel has done to the Amorites; later Balaam, in a climactic series of visions, will see Israel sprawling

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out below him in a vast spatial perspective (e.g., 23:9: "I see them from the cliff-tops,/ Espy them from the heights") which, in the last of his prophecies, becomes a temporal perspective of foreseeing (24:17: "I see it but it is not yet,/ I behold it but it won't be soon"). Balaam prefaces his last two prophecies with a formulaic affirmation of his prowess as a professional clairvoyant or ecstatic seer: "Word of Balaam son of Beor,/ Word of the man with open eyes./ Word of him who hears God's speech,/ Who beholds divine visions,/ Prostrate with eyes unveiled." All this accomplished hullabaloo of visionary practice stands in ironic contrast, of course, to the spectacle of Balaam persistently blind to the presence of an angel his ass can plainly see, until God chooses to "unveil his eyes" (22:31).

This steady insistence on God as the exclusive source of vision is complemented by reiterated phrase-motifs bearing on the disposition of blessings and curses. Balak sends for Balaam to put a hex on Israel because he believes, in his pagan naiveté, as he says to Balaam, that "What you bless is blessed/ And what you curse is cursed" (22:6). God Himself is quick to set matters straight in a night-vision to Balaam in which He uses the same two verb-stems (22:12): "You shall not curse the people because it is blessed." A whole series of changes is rung on the curse-blessing opposition, both in Balaam's visionary verse and in the exasperated dialogues between him and Balak. The appropriate thematic conclusion is explicitly made by Balaam in the preamble to his first prophecy (23:7-8): "From Aram Balak has brought me,/ Moab's king from the eastern mountains:/ Come curse me Jacob,/ Come, pronounce Israel's doom./ How can I curse what God has not cursed,/ How can I doom what the Lord has not doomed?" These verses interestingly illustrate how the prosodic repetitions of poetic parallelism can be effectively interwoven with the thematic repetition of phrases in the prose. It is important that Balaam is a poet as well as a seeer, for the story is ultimately concerned with whether language confirms or confers blessings and curses, and with the source of the power of language.

It is particularly the structure of parallel actions in the Balaam story that demonstrates how, in contrast to the complaints of Voltaire and others, the Bible's polemic monotheism can produce high comedy. Balaam goes riding off on his ass to answer Balak's invitation. In the familiar folktale pattern, there are three occurrences of the same incident, the ass shying away from the sword-brandishing angel Balaam cannot see, each time with a more discomfiting effect on her rider: first he is carried into a field, then he is squeezed against a fence, and finally the ass simply lies down under him. When he begins to beat her furiously for the third time, the Lord "opens up her mouth" (elsewhere Balaam repeatedly insists that he can only speak "what the Lord puts in my mouth"), and she complains (22:28), "What have I done to you that you should beat me these three times?" The author, one notes, makes a point of calling our attention to the three times, for the number will be important in the second half of the story. Balaam in his wrath hardly seems to notice the miraculous gift of speech but responds as though he were accustomed to having daily domestic wrangles with his asses: "You have humiliated me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you." (The Midrash *BeMidbar Rabbah*, 20:12, notes the irony of Balaam's wanting a sword to kill an ass when he has set out to destroy a whole nation with his words alone.) Only when God chooses finally to reveal to Balaam the armed angel standing in the way does he repent for ill-treating the innocent creature.

IT SEEMS fairly clear that the ass in this episode plays the role of Balaam—beholding divine visions with eyes unveiled—to Balaam's Balak. The parallel between the two halves of the story is emphasized by the fact that in Balaam's prophecies there are again three symmetrically arranged occurrences of the same incident, each time with greater discomfiture to Balak. In Balaam's prophetic imagery, first Israel is spread out like dust, then crouched like a lion, and finally rises like a star, so that the Moabite king, waiting for a first-class imprecation, is progressively reduced to impotent fury, quite in the manner of Balaam's blind rage against the wayward ass.

Now, a sequence of repeated actions in such a folktale pattern is of course a mechanical thing, and part of the genius of the biblical author here is to realize, three millennia before Bergson's formulation of the principle, that the mechanical in human affairs is a primary source of comedy. Balak's and Balaam's repetitions are much more elaborate than those of Balaam with the ass: each of the three times, Balaam instructs Balak to build seven altars and to sacrifice on them seven oxen and seven sheep, as the distraught king trundles him around from one lofty lookout point to the next; each time, the painstaking preparations result only in heightened frustration for Balak. Paganism, with its notion that divine powers can be manipulated by a caste of professionals through a set of carefully prescribed procedures, is trapped in the reflexes of a mechanistic world-view while reality is in fact controlled by the autonomous will of an omnipotent God. The contrast between these two conflicting conceptions of reality is brilliantly brought forth in the story's artful pattern of repetitions. In each repeated instance, the Moabite king and his hired prophet go through identical preparations, and each time Balaam speaks in soaring verse—the words God has put in his mouth—which constitutes a crescendo repetition of powerful vision in counterpoint to the mechanical repetition of their futile human actions. The harmony of theological argument and narra-

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tive art in the whole story is beautifully complete.

As THE Balaam episode shows with particular force, artful repetition reflects an underlying assumption of biblical narrative. Language in the biblical stories is never conceived as a transparent envelope of the narrated events, or as an aesthetic embellishment of them, but as an integral and dynamic component —an insistent dimension—of what is being narrated. With language God creates the world; through language He reveals His design in history to men. There is a supreme confidence in an ultimate coherence of meaning through language which informs the biblical vision. When the action and speech of men and women, always seen in some fateful course of convergence with or divergence from divine instruction, is reported to us in biblical narrative, repetition continually sets their lives into an intricate patterning of words. Again and again, we become aware of the power of words to make things happen. God or one of His intermediaries speaks: man may repeat and fulfill the words of revelation, repeat and delete, repeat and transform; but always there is the original urgent message to contend with, a message which in the potency of its concrete verbal formulation does not allow itself to be forgotten or ignored. On the human plane, a master speaks (for spiritual and social hierarchy is implicit in this patterning), his servant is called upon to repeat through enactment; and, most frequent of all, an action is reported by the narrator, then its protagonist recounts the action in virtually the same terms, the discrepancy between "virtually" and "exactly" providing the finely calibrated measure of his problematic subjective viewpoint. As human actors reshape recurrence in language along the biases of their own intentions or misconceptions, we see how language can be an instrument of masking or deception as well as of revelation; yet even in such deflected form we witness language repeatedly evincing the power to translate itself into history, a history whose very substance seems sometimes men and their actions, sometimes the language they use.

Beyond this constant interplay through repetition between speech and narration, biblical personages and events are caught in a finer web of reiteration in the design of thematic words and phrases constantly recurring. No act or gesture is incidental and the sequence of events is never fortuitous. The human figures in the large biblical landscape act as free agents out of the impulses of a memorable and often fiercely assertive individuality, but the actions they perform all ultimately fall into the symmetries and recurrences of God's comprehensive design. As we read the various biblical stories, we are often caught up, as we are in other kinds of narrative, with the strong individual traits of the personages and the seeming waywardness of what befalls them or what they do—Joseph in naked flight from Potiphar's wife, Jacob deceiving his wily father-in-law—but the steady pattern of repeated key words in which such actions are set persists as the rhythmic assertion of a grander destiny. Finally, it is the inescapable tension between human freedom and divine historical plan that is brought forth so luminously through the pervasive repetitions of the Bible's narrative art.

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Bach in the Original

Edward Rothstein

You play Bach your way, I will play him his way.
—Wanda Landowska

IN THOSE arts, such as music or drama, in which the interpretation of a work is necessary to its public apprehension, the interpreter is in a delicate position. In translating the silent text and giving it voice, he at the same time appropriates it; the voice he gives it is his own. The success of an interpretation, whether Olivier's Shakespeare or Landowska's Bach, lies in the dialectical balance between the appropriation of a work and its translation.

This balance becomes the more difficult to achieve the further a work is removed from contemporary consciousness. In music, one response to the difficulty has been to bowdlerize texts, to eliminate a disturbing dissonance here or a puzzling connotation there in favor of the modern sensibility. This response asserts a kind of Darwinian notion of progress: we are better able than our ancestors to know what is musical, we have superior instruments with which to execute their ideas, and so we can free the work from the accidental restrictions of its birth. An opposite approach has been that of "authenticity," the attempt to return, through scholarship, to the original text, the original instrumentation, the original performance practice. This approach holds the text and the style of the composer sacrosanct and asserts the primacy of the past over the present.

One of the most remarkable representatives of this latter impulse, the restorative impulse, has been the German conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt. With the Vienna Concentus Musicus, which he founded in 1953 with members of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Harnoncourt has recorded on the Telefunken label "authentic" performances of works by composers from Monteverdi to Mozart, but his main field of concentration has been the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Using original instrumentation, restored scores, and the "latest knowledge regarding the performance practice" of Bach's time, Harnoncourt has set down on records his interpretations of the *St. Matthew Passion,* the *St. John Passion, the B-minor Mass,* the *Brandenburg Concertos, the Orchestral Suites.* Several years ago, he embarked on a recording project, together with the harpsichordist and conductor Gustav Leonhardt and his Amsterdam-based Leonhardt Consort, which in its ambition and scope could occupy their joint attention until the three-hundredth birthday of Bach in 1985: they are recording for Telefunken his complete cantatas in authentic performances.*

Quite apart from the issue of authenticity, Harnoncourt's project is an impressive one, almost the equivalent, aurally, of the *Neue Bach Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke,* the new edition of the complete Bach that was begun twenty years ago to replace the *Bach-Gesellschaft* edition of the previous century. The cantatas constitute half of Bach's complete works, and in comparison with them, as Albert Schweitzer wrote, "everything else Bach has done appears as hardly more than a supplement." Bach's obituary noted the composition of five complete cycles of such church works, each written for a particular week in the ecclesiastical year, using texts of Lutheran hymns and Gospel-based poetry by Erdmann Neumeister (the initiator of the "new" cantata style) and other librettists. About two hundred of these nearly three hundred compositions survived the early years of Bach's eclipse, as have over twenty secular cantatas—dramatic and often humorous works written for civic celebrations. They span most of his creative life, from 1707, when, at age twenty-two, he was organist at Mühlhausen, to his final decade when as Cantor and Director of Music for the Leipzig churches he was responsible for preparing the music for the weekly services in the municipal churches. Most of the surviving church works date from Bach's first five years in Leipzig beginning in 1723, when he was required to compose and prepare for performance a new cantata every week—a prodigious output matched only by the quantity of his keyboard and orchestral compositions (and his twenty children).

UNLIKE Bach's keyboard and orchestral works, these cantatas, despite their incomparable beauty and variety, are little heard in concert and are grossly underrepresented in the recorded literature. Nearly a hundred are not even listed in the Schwann catalogue (though many of them have been released by the mail-order Musical Heritage Society) and many have been recorded only once. Any recordings of this music are therefore welcome, and those of Harnoncourt and Leonhardt, which approach the music in a spirit of scholarly dedication, and which promise to take a unified view, doubly so.

About four boxed sets of these recordings are being released each year; each contains two records offering a total (usually) of four cantatas per boxed set. Thirteen sets have been released so far, containing the first fifty cantatas of the *Bach-Gesellschaft* listing (BWV 1

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* Telefunken is likely to have an authoritative command over Bach's recorded literature by the tricentennial. They are also releasing his complete organ works performed by Michel Chapuis.

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through BWV 50). This systematic approach curiously lends variety to each set, for the numbering system does not correspond to the order in which the cantatas were written (as, for instance, the Mozart Köchel listing attempts to do), nor does it group them according to the time of the ecclesiastical year for which they were written; the numbers merely indicate the order in which the works were published by the *Gesellschaft* over a hundred years ago. Thus, the first Telefunken set contains Cantata 3, *"Ach Gott, wie Manches Herzeleid,"* written in 1725 for the second Sunday after Epiphany, and the well-known Cantata 4, *"Christ lag in Todesbanden,"* probably written in 1707 or 1708 for Easter Sunday, according to the latest research. These are very different works, and it is interesting to hear them, so to speak, back to back.

Included in each set are three booklets of notes which practically exhaust the possibilities for complete documentation. One contains a brief and informed historical essay about the cantatas by Alfred Dürr (whose research has radically changed the established dating of the cantatas through examination of watermarks, handwriting, and style), and an essay by Harnoncourt about the motivations behind the recording project. Dürr also contributes a brief analysis of each cantata in the second booklet which contains the complete text in the original and in English and French translations, and a discussion of the specific problems of scoring and instrumentation that arise in performance. Finally, included in every set is the full musical score for each cantata in miniature reproduction of the *Gesellschaft* edition, or, if it is available, the *Neue Werke* edition.

The inclusion of the score is evidence of the higher intentions of the project, of its seriousness, its announced willingness to be judged by the letter of the text. It also allows a look at Bach's pictorical musical language. *"Musica poetica,"* a baroque musical affectation practiced earlier by Schütz and Buxtehude, was raised to a new level by Bach. Albert Schweitzer's *Bach* contains nearly a complete concordance of Bach's symbolic musical vocabulary for the translation of emotion, in which the melodic line and the continuo line combine to paint individual words as well as the overall spirit of the piece. Thus, the word "descent" is sung with a descending line; "grief" is accompanied by chromaticism. There are even canonical rhythms for joy (an eighth followed by two sixteenths) and sorrow (a "sighing" motif consisting of two slurred descending sixteenths with a strong accent on the first note of the group). Seeing the score emphasizes these effects even more. Satan is pictured in a winding serpentine series of thirty-seconds that blacken the staff. To represent freedom from earthly ties, the continuo line is omitted. Arias dealing with faith are fugal. The score also reveals effects that might be inaudible, such as Bach's predilection for numerical symbolism.*

If the inclusion of the score is important to the apprehension of the works, the inclusion of the texts is essential, for they were the starting point of Bach's own interpretative project. In this connection it is unfortunate that the English translation provided does not attempt to be literal. Even minor liberties change the spirit of the text: *"Liebster Jesu, mein verlangen"* should not be translated "Dearest Jesus sore I need thee," which severely restricts the erotic connotations of the words, but "Dearest Jesus, my craving," or *"objet de mes désirs,"* as the French translation has it. There is also at least one really curious instance of mistranslation that borders on the deliberately deceptive: *"Friede über Israel,"* rendered correctly in French as *"Paix sur Israël,"* appears in English as "Peace be unto all Mankind." This gratuitous ecumenicism is all the more out of place in a project which when it comes to musical translation prides itself on being as literal as possible.

Still, the degree to which Harnoncourt and Leonhardt have succeeded in their undertaking is not to be measured by the English translations of the texts or by the inclusion of scores and commentary, but by the interpretations they offer of the music. Because their project is meant to be definitive, questions may be raised about it of a musicological nature. There has already been some questioning, for instance, of whether Bach did indeed use the lower performance pitch that Harnoncourt says he did. Furthermore, some of Harnoncourt's choices of instruments and the size of his orchestral forces have been challenged, as have some of his phrasings. And it has been argued that the practice of Bach in St. Thomas's may not really have been indicative of the general performing practice of his time since he may have had to make compromises on the basis of the forces and talent available to him.

BUT the heart of the matter is the performance, and at the heart of the performance is Harnoncourt's ideology of authenticity, in the service of which he goes to such lengths as personally researching the score and using male sopranos —boys, not castrati—and vintage instruments whose dates and makes are listed with each recording. For his recording of the *Brandenburg Concertos* he chose as his studio the baroque hall of Schönberg Palace in Vienna. All of this is meant to return the listener to the sound and style of the music as it was originally performed, and so release him from the illusions of intervening history. Does it work?

When one first listens to these performances, the ear has to adjust to new timbres and sounds. It is somewhat like shifting one's gaze at

* The Crucifixus of the *B-minor Mass* is written over a passacaglia bass line ominously repeated thirteen times. There are more obscure instances. Harnoncourt points out in his comments on the *St. Matthew Passion* that the number of notes in the continuo line occurring under three passages describing an earthquake refer to the numbers of the Psalms in which the descriptions appear. Karl Geirenger, in his fine biography of Bach, discusses a canon Bach wrote for a musical society after Handel had joined: "The bass of the canon is borrowed from a chaconne by Handel. The composition's first measure contains eight notes and the whole piece, including the imitations, sixty notes. A person conversant with the number-alphabet would not find it difficult to discover the hidden meaning. Apparently 8 stands for the first letter of Handel, and 60 for his full name (G.F. Handel)."

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an art exhibition from an ebullient Impressionist painting to a finely detailed etching by Rembrandt. It is not merely the quantity of sound which has changed, but also the quality, which is more restrained, less smooth, somewhat reedier though no less passionate than in "modern" renditions of Bach. The older baroque instruments used in these recordings are richer in overtones and more distinctive in color than newer ones. Gut strings and baroque bows cause the string instruments to sound as if the notes were being physically pulled out from them, drawn from their innards. There are differences of articulation too; just as a harpsichord will not phrase the way a piano does, the smooth effortless line of the contemporary orchestra is replaced here by an earthier, almost wavering, song-like quality which is transparent even in ensemble.

Once one has entered this alien world, variations can be discerned, especially as between Harnoncourt and his colleague Leonhardt. It has been pointed out that Harnoncourt speaks with the voice of the Viennese school of string playing and Leonhardt with the voice of the Northern keyboard tradition (Harnoncourt plays the gamba in his recordings, Leonhardt the organ continuo); Leonhardt's performances, of sixteen out of these fifty cantatas, consequently have a more direct quality. And where Harnoncourt uses the emotive power of the strings to vary the intensity of his short but lush phrases, Leonhardt seems to prefer a more even phrasing technique. Yet the two have essentially similar ideas, and one can speak of the performances as a unified, joint effort.

Many of the performances, quite simply, are exquisite. The baroque instruments combine well with the human voice, and every line, including the often lost continuo foundation, remains clear. One relishes, too, the sound of the instrumental combinations alone—the breathy baroque flute playing alongside a violin, a tenor's voice echoing a phrase of the oboe. The clarity of texture gives even the fullest choral movements an excitement that comes from being able to hear each voice. The soloists (except for the sopranos) are uniformly fine. The recitatives are excellent and serve as effective textual and dramatic bridges between movements; the chorales which close most of the cantatas can be quite moving, and seal the pieces as they should.

But the recordings do not provide a wholly satisfactory encounter with the cantatas. There are, first of all, occasional problems with tempos (as in the bass aria in Cantata 13, with its overdone "groaning and weeping," or in the soprano aria in Cantata 31 where the tempo is too fast to convey the death-wish quality of the words, "Final hour break over me"), and in some places phrasing is exaggerated; Harnoncourt's recurring pulsations especially disrupt the long line of the music. Bach himself stressed the need for *cantabile* playing, the art of singing each instrumental line as though with a human voice, but Harnoncourt's strings sometimes seem to parody the human voice in its most distorted moments. His instrumental treatment, for example, of the aria, "Our mouths and sounding strings," from the first cantata, mocks the meaning of the words. The playing can become baroque in the derogatory sense; one hears the concentrated attention being paid to individual phrases and to filigree, but the whole is oblique, a misshapen pearl.

The long line which is often missing in these performances should carry the listener through the entire work; it gives the work its drama. And these pieces are founded on dramatic principles; they were meant to affect the listener through a kind of cathartic transformation that would prepare him for the church sermon that followed. The pieces embody both the subjective trials of faith and the answers of Lutheranism to those trials. Whether the cantatas take a traditional Lutheran choral hymn and play out its meanings in harmony and word, as in *"Christ lag in Todesbanden,"* or base themselves on a pietistic text arising out of the Gospel, as in the other Easter cantata, *"Der Himmel Lacht,"* the effect must be total and totally dramatic.

The cantatas are Bach's double interpretation of the librettist's text and of the more abstract "text" of religious faith, both translated into musical form through word painting and counterpoint. And Bach's musical genius also has two sides, or faces, "one face looking back to the epoch of formal architectonic structure, the other turned toward the future—toward the freest subjectivity of musical speech," in the words of the pianist Von Lüpke. The task of the performer is to encompass both these double aspects, balancing the fixed canons of form against the demands of subjectivity, Lutheran orthodoxy against the silent inwardness of mystical pietism. If these recordings are not entirely satisfying, it is because they sometimes lack this balance or necessary tension, a defect traceable to their too-rigid adherence to the ideal of literal authenticity.

HARNONCOURT has argued that he chose his method of presentation for artistic reasons, not merely historical ones: the music, he believes, is best served by these instruments and this mode of performance. But in several instances the text as a whole suffers. One such instance is the introductory orchestral sonata to Cantata 31. The cantata was written at Weimar in the "choir pitch" of the Weimar organ which was tuned a minor third above the "chamber pitch" of the woodwinds. Since the violins at Weimar were tuned to the organ's pitch, the woodwinds had to transpose upward a minor third to play in tune. To recreate the original performance Harnoncourt follows the same practice and retunes the strings. "Naturally," he writes, "a completely unusual sound picture of the string orchestra results from this today." This is an understatement: the sound is unnatural, the music is utterly destroyed. The movement, scored for a full orchestra with trumpet fanfares, is meant to herald the joy of the choral second movement, *"Der Himmel lacht."* As played, the piece fails dramatically as well as musically, and the tinny bodiless sound only adds to the difficulties created by a labored and varying tempo.

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Harnoncourt's "solution" seems all the more strange when one considers Bach's own handling of the scoring problem when he took the score to Leipzig. There, the violins customarily played in the lower "chamber pitch," so Bach simply transposed the organ part downward; in this way the strings did not have to be retuned, and the problem of inaccessible depths in the woodwind scores was solved by altering the instrumentation. Bach's emergency solution, which must have sounded satisfactory, involved a change in the scoring and in Harnoncourt's reasoning would supposedly have been "inauthentic" because the Leipzig performance differed from the Weimar one. In fact one of the issues at stake here, Bach's performance pitch as compared with today's, is still an open question.

DOGMATIC authenticity leads to another difficulty when it extends, as it does in these performances, to the use of boy sopranos. Just as Shakespeare, had the choice been open, might not have wished a twelve-year-old boy to appear as Lady Macbeth or Cordelia, so Bach might well have regarded the use of boy sopranos as an unfortunate if necessary compromise—the dramatic meaning of many cantatas would appear to require a woman's voice. The duets for soprano and bass suffer especially, since the two voices typically represent the Soul and Christ respectively, the Soul being also the Bride to Christ the Bridegroom (following the Christian interpretation of the Song of Songs). These arias are known as erotic duets, and not merely for their sensuous intertwining of voices. Cantata 140:

SOUL: When will you come,
my Salvation?
JESUS: I am coming thy Part.
(Thine own)
SOUL: I wait with burning oil.
Open the hall
To the heavenly feast.
JESUS: I open the hall
To the heavenly feast.
SOUL: Come, Jesus!
JESUS: Come, beloved soul!*

Cantata 21 has a duet only a bit less suggestive: "Come Jesus, revive and gladden my soul with thy regard," the Soul pleads, "*Ja ich komme und erquicke,*" replies Jesus. "Indeed thou art saved, I love thee." The two voices repeat and reply, "*Komm mein Jesu, Ja ich komme.*"

When a boy soprano sings the part of the soul, any potentiality for soul-quickening seems to vanish: instead of a woman longing for her lover, we have a boy innocently seeking the protection of an older man in disturbingly insinuating language.

Albert Schweitzer once argued that "a time will come when boy sopranos would again be used in these pieces because of the natural lightness of boys' voices" and their "full, penetrating, objective tone." But the objective tone is just the problem when the voice must address itself to Bach's most subjective texts: "Sighing, tears, distress, grief . . . prey upon my distressed heart." "Hour of parting, come to me"; "the grievous night of sorrows presses down my faltering heart." Sung by a twelve-year-old boy, these words seem almost bizarre (comparable, perhaps, to having a boy soprano sing Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*). The drama of the soul, the driving force of eros, are hard to locate in the "objective" tone and musical immaturity of a child. Though the voices and phrasing are at times beautiful, more often there are audible breath and intonation problems, and one never senses the depth of feeling that a mature artist can deliver. (Is it an indication of their acknowledgment of the problem that Leonhardt and Harnoncourt by and large omit the soprano soloists' names from these recordings?)

LITERAL authenticity of this kind denies a musical text's historical life of transmutation and interpretation. Harnoncourt says that his recordings are an attempt "at releasing the great old music from its historical amalgamation with the classical symphonic sound and by means of the transparent and characteristic selection of old instruments, at finding a truly modern interpretation." He is right to call his interpretation modern; it would not have been possible before the extensive scholarship of this century, not to mention its engineering and technology. Nor is the "release" he speaks of to be scoffed at, especially when he has in mind performances that have obscured the music "with an unsorted blend of geniality, traditions of the 19th century, and ignorance." But the past cannot be simply invalidated, and release is not the same thing as replacement. In what sense can the revival of the harpsichord be said to have provided a release from piano interpretations of Bach? Indeed, even the most "inauthentic" approaches to each of these instruments, Wanda Landowska's romantic harpsichord and Glenn Gould's eccentric piano, can live side by side together and speak through recordings to equally important aspects of Bach's genius.

The dogma of authenticity must in the end come up against the ultimate irreversibility of historical musical sensibility. Igor Stravinsky, in his *Poetics of Music*, tells of one encounter with the extreme "archeological" approach:

> One day the *Comédie francaise* was rehearsing a medieval play in which the celebrated actor Mounet-Sully, according to the author's directions, had to swear an oath on an old Bible. For rehearsals the old Bible had been replaced by a telephone directory. "The script calls for an old Bible," roared Mounet-Sully. "Get me an old Bible!" Jules Claretie, the director of the *Comédie*, promptly rushed to his library to find a copy of the two testaments in a magnificent old edition and brought it triumphantly to the actor. "Here you are, *mon cher Doyen*," said Claretie, "a 15th-century edition. . . ." "Fifteenth century!" said Mounet-Sully. "But then at that time it was brand new. . . ."

This is Harnoncourt's dilemma, too. His recordings are recordings of old music in an old style. But at the time the music was written, it was brand new. It spoke naturally in its new language, and its interpreter needed no scholarly research to uncover methods of trill executions, of filling out a figured bass,

* Translation by Joshua Rifkin.

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or of improvising in a baroque manner upon a theme. What happens today when one attempts to recreate that moment by denying the past three hundred years of musical history is similar to the dilemma facing a contemporary composer who sits down to write an "authentic" baroque prelude and fugue. What emerges is a *stylization*—a creation that arises out of imitation and the rules of imitation, rather than out of the wellsprings of contemporary consciousness.

MUSICAL orthodoxy insists that the texts of the past are primarily historical documents rather than artistic ones, and to the extent that they speak to the present they must do so with the voice of the past, to the extent they are to be appropriated artistically they can be appropriated in only one mode. This thesis is as misapplied to music as it is to exegesis of the Bible. If a text is not responsive to different consciousnesses it will not last, but will become an archeological work, of interest only to cultural historians. The Bible has responded with equanimity to medieval scholasticism, gnostic mysticism, Freudian analysis, and existential hermeneutics, because it is a work open with possibility. So with the musical texts of the past. Chopin is reputed to have said, after hearing Liszt perform a Chopin Nocturne: "Whose piece is this?"

Landowska once wrote: "At no time in the course of my work have I ever tried to reproduce exactly what the old masters did. Instead, I study, I scrutinize, I love, and I recreate." The word *bacchante*, she said, "would suit me . . ., but one that works hard, zealous as a schoolgirl, trying to understand the letter, fustigating herself 'to make it sound,' and then forgetting everything—books and laws—unleashed, intoxicated with freedom." This is the secret of playing Bach "his way." Harnoncourt's and Leonhardt's performances are not entirely successful partly because they ignore this secret. Their interpretations tend to be stylized and overdrawn, and so much attention is paid to detail that the drama gets lost. The reluctance to take risks in interpretation robs the music of the force which is hinted at in these recordings but seldom fully expressed—the force not of the original "live" presentation but the force of the musical drama which speaks both for itself and for its religious roots.

Yet it would be surprising indeed if anybody could perform every one of the cantatas with its full mystery and drama. These recordings are important for the scholarship they reflect, for their restoration of a "baroque" sound, for their de-bowdlerization of the text. After hearing them and living in their world it is difficult to go back to the performances of Karl Richter, or Robert Shaw, without missing the clarity of articulated phrase and audible score which Harnoncourt and Leonhardt achieve. And whatever quarrels one might have with the ideology that lies behind the performances one must acknowledge their eloquent beauty which recalls the feeling of absolute necessity in Bach's works, as though the entire piece were emanating out of a single theme. Telefunken, with its clear recordings and lavish presentation, has served the performances well. Certainly any lover of Bach should own at least one of these sets, not because their "authenticity" grants them any sort of priority, but because they offer a new view of the cantatas by representing them in yet another of their many possible incarnations.

NOTE

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St. Matthew Passion, 4635047

Movies

Obsessions

William S. Pechter

I FIDGETED my way through at least two-thirds of *The Story of Adèle H.*, waiting for it to get off the ground. The materials are all impressive: the daughter of a remote and famous father, trying to wrest her own identity from under her father's shadow, even while vying for his affections with the memory of a favored younger sister no longer alive; her own tortured feelings about that younger sister and her death; and, above all, her pursuit to the point of obsession of an unrequited love, a pursuit which serves not only as a rebellion against her father's wishes but as her attempt to find a calling for herself to equal his. But though Adèle, the headstrong heroine of this new film by François Truffaut, is clearly in the line of those earlier heroines of *Jules and Jim* and *Two English Girls* (heroines about whom Truffaut plainly feels some deep ambivalence), the

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film itself seems, rather more like *The Wild Child*, one of its director's high-cultural affairs, with time out while one character unreels what sounds like an entry on Victor Hugo from some biographical dictionary, and a style that's all grave simplicity and a strict austerity of means. (The heroine is, in fact, Hugo's daughter, and the film opens with an announcement that its story is true.) Indeed, this is a Truffaut film to remind one of Bresson, an impression confirmed by Truffaut's contriving to dress Adèle, at the moment she is making her most impassioned plea to the lover who's rejected her, in men's formal evening wear and top hat, recalling the attire of the martyred heroine of Bresson's legendary *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*. Yet even while recognizing the appropriateness of the film's dark, cramped look, one finds oneself growing restlessly impatient for some relief from it. And susceptible though I am to stories of beautiful women wasting their loves and lives on unworthy objects (Ophuls's *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, Duvivier's *Lydia*), somehow this one stubbornly fails to move me. Simple and austere though it is, there's also something faintly dull in its impeccable tastefulness.

The problem is that insofar as Adèle's focus remains fixed on Lieutenant Pinson—the British officer who's loved and left her, and whom she's followed from Guernsey (where her father is in exile) to Nova Scotia—her quest obstinately fails to grow into the acting out of some soaringly romantic and magnificent obsession, but remains instead merely a clinical case of self-defeating and self-destructive behavior by a neurotic and not entirely sympathetic young woman. This isn't quite to say, as some reviewers (and Truffaut himself) have suggested, that one's sympathies ever go to Pinson, a shallow womanizer who, in happening on Adèle, has got in over his depth. But we do feel some sense of Adèle as Pinson himself must see her: as impossibly demanding, smotheringly possessive, all-consuming. And we can see how, even as she strives for their reuniting (as in their tryst scene together, in the parlor of her rooming house), she hurls herself at him with such devouring intensity as inevitably to succeed only in driving him further away. Indeed, one even wonders if this isn't, if only half-consciously, what she really wants: there's a striking moment during the first half of the film when Adèle, spying on Pinson's rendezvous with another woman, watches while they begin to make love, and we see her face as it breaks into a faint, enigmatic smile; and of the several meanings one might sense in that smile, the foremost is that of her perverse satisfaction in seeing just how badly things are going for her. Even the little declaration-of-love notes she manages to secrete in the pockets of Pinson's uniform seem almost calculated only to add annoyance to annoyance. ("At this moment, I don't love you," etc.) Presumably, one is supposed to be moved by the romantic grandeur of Adèle's passion. What struck me instead—watching her go about invariably making things worse—was the probably philistine thought that here, obviously, was someone deeply disturbed and in urgent need of help.

AND yet *The Story of Adèle H.* finally does get off the ground, and even soars, and one can almost pinpoint the precise moment at which it begins to do so. That moment comes when Adèle, having spent all the money her father has sent her for the journey home, is forced to leave her lodgings, and finally to face the extent to which she's brought herself to worldly ruin and beyond any hope of regaining Pinson; and still, though we see her, for the first time, burst into tears, she doesn't turn back. It is the moment from which her obsession is clearly no longer, on any personal level, with the man who's previously been its incarnation. Sleeping in a doss house that night, she is awakened by a woman in the next bed trying to rifle the trunk containing the voluminous diary Adèle has kept since setting out to rejoin Pinson. "Don't touch that! It's my book!" Adèle hisses at the woman, and rolls onto the floor to spend the night hugging the diary to her like a lover. For, indeed, the book itself has replaced her human lover; it is her masterwork, testament to the art with which she's wrought her commitment and her suffering, and Pinson represents only the crude raw materials on which her artistry has worked its transformation. (This transference of her obsession from Pinson to the book is further emphasized by the increased "bookishness" of her look as, by the end, she's taken permanently to wearing glasses.) From that moment on, it's almost a foregone conclusion that Adèle's obsession will so far outstrip embodiment by a mere "Lieutenant Pinson" that by the end (when she herself has been transformed from a beautiful young woman into some wildly distracted-looking cross between a Rosicrucian and—particularly in one image framing her in an archway—the vampire in *Nosferatu*) she will reach the point—and it seems the culmination of her obsession—of being unable even to recognize him.

Earlier, she had written in her diary (with what seems an obvious reference to her father's political commitments), "Let them have liberty . . . dignity. . . . Love is my religion." It is, of course, not any one man (least of all anyone so unworthy as Pinson) but love itself with which Adèle is obsessed; she is, like Catherine in *Jules and Jim* and the sisters in *Two English Girls*, one of Truffaut's female ideologists of love: a case (to bend Lawrence) of not sex but love in the head. Seen in this light, much that is troubling falls into place: Pinson's palpable unworthiness, for example, far from making her pursuit of him less likely, seems necessary; anyone can love a worthy object, but it takes a kind of artist of love—a kind of priestess—to love someone who's despicable. Nor does it seem a failing, as some reviewers have complained, that one misses in Adèle's obsession a sense of erotic passion; passion isn't lacking, but it's to be found in her passionate rage to selfhood. And given this, Truffaut's making Adèle a beautiful woman in her early twenties (the real Adèle Hugo was actually thirty-three years old in 1863, when the film's action begins) also serves a purpose; were

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she older or less attractive, her pursuit of Pinson might seem motivated simply by a lack of other opportunities, while this particular Adèle seems to act with a freedom of choice. Yet it also becomes more clear how little Adèle was, in other ways, free to choose, formed as she is by her relations with her father, whose fame may make for a special case but who is also sensed (thus the anonymous "H." of the title) as a paradigm of every remote father figure in the father-daughter family romance. And haunted as she is by dreams of her drowning sister, it's no wonder that she should seek to compete with her by defying (*walking* on) the very element that claimed her sister's (and sister's husband's) life—that she should vow, before setting out on her voyage from home (and to the limits of madness): "This incredible thing—that a girl who today begs her father for her daily bread, would come into her own . . . this I shall accomplish. This incredible thing—that a young girl shall walk over the sea, from the Old into the New World, to join her lover—this, I shall accomplish."

I DON'T think that the mounting power which infuses the later sections of *The Story of Adèle H.* really carries the earlier parts along with it, but it is, in itself, a considerable achievement. And the film ends with a sequence which soars as high as anything in the best of Truffaut: one of those instances of film-making of a sort in which his own early work abounds perhaps more richly than that of any other director—film-making at once limpid in its apparent simplicity and almost unanalyzable in its complex emotional effect. The sequence consists of a small montage of old photographs and engravings of such things as Victor Hugo's return from exile, the sanitarium where Adèle spent the remainder of her life, the crowds at her father's funeral, his headstone and her own—all to the accompaniment of some perfectly matched music by the late Maurice Jaubert, while a narrator's voice fills us in, in a slightly rushed, clipped, unemphatic style, on such matters as how Adèle spent her final forty years of confinement ("gardening, playing the piano . . . writing her diary in code"), her father's last words ("I see a black light"), and her death in 1915, all but unnoticed in the turmoil of a world at war. Somehow our response to all this—above all, to the terrible waste, and to the sense of the characters' clinging forever, unyieldingly, to their secrets—is crucially dependent on our knowledge that there was a real Adèle, with our inability to disentangle this work's truths from its fictions growing into wider apprehension of the unfathomable mystery of human personality. And then the film ends with something we've been shown before (then, too, in flashback): the image of Adèle, in the radiant glow of her youth and beauty, as she stands at the ocean's edge and, facing out to it, declares: "This incredible thing—that a young girl shall walk over the sea . . . to join her lover—this, I shall accomplish." It's an image almost any other director would have frozen, but Truffaut, whose use of a freeze frame to end *The 400 Blows* launched a thousand imitations (without one of them tapping the expressive power of the original), has chosen instead, with a resultant felicity that's almost uncanny, to show it in motion (and in monochrome, in this color film), giving it the sense of something at once fixed irretrievably in the past and yet ongoing through eternity.

There's one wonderful moment early in the film when Adèle, newly arrived in Nova Scotia, stops a soldier she mistakes for Pinson in the street, and, when he turns to face her, we see it is Truffaut himself, who stares at her in bafflement, as if to ask: what is it this woman wants of me? In this film, for all its faults, Truffaut has, one finally feels, honorably discharged the obligation he must have felt to the tormented figure of Adèle for the hold she clearly had on his imagination. *The Story of Adèle H.* isn't, I think, a great film (neither, I think, could one call Isabelle Adjani's delicately muted performance as Adèle a great one), and some of it isn't even all that good, but I can think of few other films, even among better ones, that are more thematically rich, or that left me in a more profound state of emotional agitation.

IF THE beginning of *The Story of Adèle H.* suffers from overreticence, Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* starts off seizing one by the throat, and doesn't let go until it's over. There's a tendency, perhaps, to try to resist and even to resent so forceful an attempt by a film to draw one into a distorted vision; and I suspect it's true that the film's grip would be considerably lessened in a second viewing, dependent as it is on a suspense as to when and how its ticking time bomb of a protagonist will explode. But the vision, however distorted, has authority; if this is the hellish New York City of *Little Murders* and similar ventures *ad infinitum*, it is depicted as never before, with an absolute and ferocious conviction. The film's New York—a seething cesspool of violence, hatred, and insanity—may not actually exist, but it exists in this film with the force of some nightmare from which we struggle to awaken.

Like Adèle, Travis Bickle, the taxi-driver protagonist of the film, keeps a journal of his obsessions: "All the animals come out at night . . . whores . . . junkies. . . . Someday a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets." And: "Loneliness has followed me my whole life . . . in cars and bars . . . everywhere. There's no escape from God's lonely man." He wants to work at night because he can't sleep, and roams the city in his cab—we first see it, in the film's opening image, emerging like some animal from what seems the mist of a primordial swamp—oppressed by the city's squalor, abused and degraded by his fares. ("Each night when I return the car to the garage, I have to clean the come off the back seat. Some nights I have to clean off the blood.") From the very first, we sense it's just a matter of time before this man will kill, and kill with a concentrated fury. So clearly does this seem his destiny that, when he does first kill (by chance: he happens to be in a grocery store and carrying a gun when the store is being held up, and he shoots the robber), it doesn't even

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seem to count: just another of the daily incidents of life in New York; and it's left to the store's owner to vent *his* pent-up fury by savagely beating the robber's corpse.

We don't really succeed, in a psychological sense, in understanding Travis; and for a time the film seems heading toward his assassinating a presidential candidate and a bout of facile, Nashville-style social significance. But the film gets past that. And though Travis's actions and utterances seem a psychologically inconsistent patchwork of encounter-group "sensitivity" platitudes and *Lumpen* crudity, he remains, convincingly, the sort of media-mixed creature that this city, in its death throes, might throw up to its surface: less a psychological or social than a conceptual creation, a conceit—the quintessential New Yorker. He's the avenging angel of backlash, striking back at everything and everyone that can serve as emblem for his impotence and frustration. ("Here's a man who would not take it any more. Here is a man who stood up against the scum.") He's a walking arsenal of guns and knives, trained by his own hand to be, in himself, a weapon: a kamikaze in the cause of all-embracing, nihilistic vengeance.

Travis's fastening on the political candidate as his victim has no political motive; the man is merely a surrogate for one of his campaign workers, a young woman whom Travis has idealized as a figure of angelic purity, and who's rejected him. (It's a rejection, like Adèle's, he seems half-consciously to have courted.) But when that assassination attempt misfires, Travis shifts, without missing a beat, to another target; he's ready, one feels, and it hardly matters whom he kills. His eruption, when it finally comes, is as full of surreal horror as anything one might have dreaded, and ends, as the police appear with weapons drawn, with Travis sitting, spent and half-dead, in the midst of the carnage he's created, his blood-dripping finger pointed to his temple as he smiles and imitates the sound of a gun's report. And one realizes that what we've just seen, what, indeed, we've been seeing throughout the film, is a prolonged suicide: that this, in a sense, is how one commits suicide in New York—not (as at the other end of the continent) by solitary leaps from graceful bridges, but by going on a murderous rampage, and bloodily taking as much as one can down with one. And though this vision of the New Yorker as a suicide turned outward surely is, as much as Travis's own vision of New York, a distortion of reality, its nightmarish intensity nevertheless holds one with an authentic power.

The trouble—one trouble—is that *Taxi Driver* doesn't end there. Travis, it seems, didn't die, and there's an epilogue (whose weak ironies seem a distinct letdown from what's gone before) in which we learn that, his victims having been criminals, Travis was hailed as a hero—this followed by a coda in which Travis again meets the woman whose rejection triggered his explosion, and spurns her friendly overtures. And though the ironic comment of the epilogue stands out from the rest of the film as an egregiously clever touch, its falseness seems close at hand whenever the film ventures from its narrow but intense, nightmarish range into some suggestion of a broader psychological or social significance.

The film's writer, Paul Schrader, is a young film critic whose unfortunate book on Bresson and other "transcendental" film-makers has earned him some abuse for his work here, but he's a critic who's also written enthusiastically on those moody, violent thrillers of the 40's now known pretentiously but, it seems, inescapably as *films noirs*, and his divided sympathies as a critic seem reflected in the divisions within *Taxi Driver* itself. But if *Taxi Driver*'s head is a muddle of Dostoevsky and Bresson (the Bresson of *Pickpocket*, the very point at which Bresson starts to go bad), its heart is decidedly with those dark 40's thrillers. (Only the late Bernard Herrmann's last score, at least the jazz-tinged sections of it, seems too deliberately overripe an evocation of the *noir* ambience, though the Gothic-horror, *Citizen Kane*-like sections seem to me to work beautifully.) And Schrader has, at least, found the nexus between his models in an image that seems equally to distill the essence of *Pickpocket* and *films noirs:* the image of a lonely man in a furnished room, waiting for something to happen which will draw him into and connect him with that night-world outside, a man at once the hunter and the hunted.

And it's not the muddled head but the dark heart of these materials that Scorsese has intensified, as has Robert De Niro in his commanding performance as Travis. But though dark, it is also funny (I think particularly of a moment in a cafeteria when some cabbies' talk about the "Mau Mau" awaiting them outside is followed by a traveling shot up what appears to be row after row of menacing black dudes sitting and drumming their fingers on table tops, waiting).

Taxi Driver is Scorsese's most tautly brilliant work yet, with passages of a stylistic bravura that remain fully integrated to the work, and only one scene (a conversation between De Niro and Peter Boyle in front of the latter's cab) that has that slack feel of underinspired and overextended improvisation which, for me, marred too much of *Mean Streets*. Like *Mean Streets* (which was shot by a different photographer), the film has a distinctly original look: a raw, bloody, burning look, like a neon-lit wound. And, at its center, is the image of Robert De Niro's fiery eyes: the first thing we see of him, and the last. Some have seen the movie's coda as another (weak) irony: the "hero" snubbing the woman who's previously rejected him; but I think not. Rather, the sense I had was of his indifference (one might almost say, post-coital) to the woman he's now violently purged from his psyche. But given the last, shattered image of his eyes, it seems to me plain that she won't be the last such woman, and that it won't be long before Travis will be suicidally, murderously, purging himself of some similarly raging pain once again.

Taxi Driver may be strong stuff, but at least it doesn't bash your head to a pulp to enforce your submission. *Seven Beauties,* Lina Wertmuller's latest exercise in making

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films at the top of the lungs—the equivalent to film direction of mugging to acting—chances no such amenities. And like her earlier films (though raised here to a higher power), it's an exercise also in the art of saying all things to all men: of throwing everything into one crammed melange, in hopes that somehow it will all work out. That it does work, one can have no doubts: Miss Wertmuller is currently the hottest foreign-language film director in New York, object of extravagant encomia from virtually every movie critic to be found there (with the honorable exceptions of Molly Haskell, Pauline Kael, and Ellen Willis). This time Miss Wertmuller's traveling circus sets up at the Nazi death camps, to perform a gaudy, sensation-mongering freak show featuring garbled "profundities" on such themes as the human condition and what-price-survival, as its life-force protagonist's obsession with survival at all costs leads him to an act of fornication with the Ilse Koch-like camp commandant and then to a position as *kapo*. Is the commandant—yet another of this director's grotesquely fat, man-mountainous females (and the film is stuffed with others)—repulsive? On the contrary, Miss Wertmuller says that fat (and Shirley Stoler, who plays the commandant) is beautiful. Is the (thin) protagonist's obsessed clinging to survival a trait to be deplored or admired? Despite the loving indulgence with which the leading man, Giancarlo Giannini is once again photographed (and the almost axiomatic value which the will to live carries for an audience), we are told it's the former. The film, the director would have it, is, in fact, an advocacy of suicide in a world turned to excrement, a case she pleads by having the film's mouthpiece of this and other progressive ideas portrayed as a wholly ineffectual figure who actually commits suicide by jumping into a vat of excrement. Why is it that claims that fat women are beautiful seem less convincing when made by a filmmaker whose work is so manifestly filled with a shuddery repugnance for female flesh? Why is it that advocacies of suicide from on high ring less true when the advocate is off with her entourage, partying in New York with the Beautiful People?

In fact, I think none of this matters; and *Seven Beauties* would be no better whether it were for survival or against it. What *Seven Beauties* is, in fact, is a centrifuge of screeching effects in the gaping void at the center of which stands the saucer-eyed Giannini, doing his reprise of his *Seduction of Mimi* reprise of Marcello Mastroianni's strutting, greasy-haired Lothario. What does it matter what *Seven Beauties* "stands for"—what does anything matter in the face of work so coarsely unfeeling? Nor does it matter to me that *Seven Beauties* is set in the death camps; I can accept that even the death camps aren't beyond the reach of black laughter. But such laughter, if it's not to be offensive to any concept of humanity, has to be earned by some passionate caring and conviction. Whereas *Seven Beauties* is death-camp chic: a Bloomingdale's window dressed for the Holocaust; the *Mondo Cane* of fiction films, peddling its thrills under cover of moral loftiness, and fittingly drawing its loudest praise from the critic who found *Mondo Cane* itself trenchantly Swiftian. It's unspeakable; and that New York has clasped Lina Wertmuller and this film to its bosom probably speaks the last word on the city's decadence. Travis Bickle's cab glides through a New York all of whose movie theaters seem to be playing either pornos or *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. One almost looks forward to seeing him return in *Taxi Driver II*, wreaking his vengeance on a New York filled with marquees advertising nothing but *Snuff* and *Seven Beauties*.

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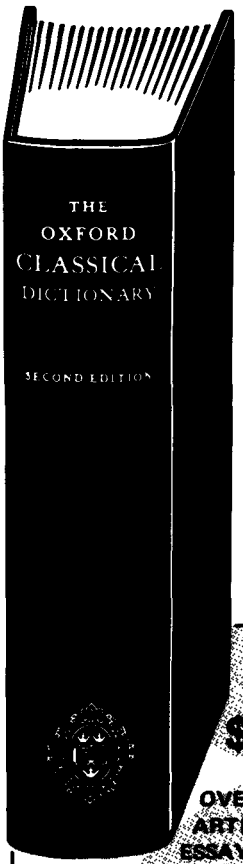

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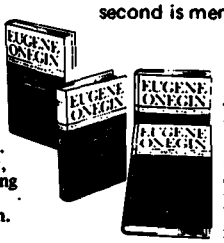

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Books in Review

The New Quotas

AFFIRMATIVE DISCRIMINATION: ETHNIC INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY. By NATHAN GLAZER. *Basic Books. 248 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM PETERSEN

THIS important book is one of the first full-length accounts of the reverse discrimination known as "affirmative action," and of how that policy has operated in the fields of employment, education, and housing. According to the federal agencies that practice it, affirmative action is mandated by the laws against discrimination. But as Nathan Glazer demonstrates, affirmative action as it is practiced is unequivocally illegal, contrary to specific provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Not only does that act prohibit discrimination in general, it also provides with respect to employment, for instance, that "nothing contained in this title should be interpreted to require any employer . . . to grant preferential treatment to any individual or to any group because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin . . . on account of an imbalance which may exist with respect to the total number or percentage." If the language were not sufficiently clear in itself, it was spelled out on the floor of Congress by Senators Joseph Clark and Clifford Case, who acted as the bill's floor managers: "The question in each case is whether that *individual* was discriminated against." "Quotas are themselves discriminatory."

Nevertheless, corporations have been required to meet numerical goals in the hiring and promotion of certain "minorities" (a term ambiguous enough in ordinary usage and here stretched to include women, who make up a majority) and have also been penalized on the basis of statistical evidence alone. Thus, for example, AT&T was forced by the so-called Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to pay some tens of millions of dollars in "back pay" to "minority" employees even though no act of discrimination by the company against any *individual* employee was ever admitted or proved.

The busing issue is even stranger. The *Brown* decision affirmed that distinction by race should have no place in public education, but in the name of that decision schools have been forced to ignore virtually every other characteristic of their pupils and arrange them by racial quotas. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 asserted: "Nothing herein shall empower any official or court of the United States to issue any order seeking to achieve a racial balance in any school by requiring the transportation of pupils." Yet federal judges everywhere have been issuing precisely such orders. In this area, as with employment, the clear meaning of the law is violated in the name of enforcing it, while both the popular will and the well-being of the children are ignored. According to polls over the past several years, a substantial majority of the electorate, both black and white, is against busing; and the evidence that its effects are mainly deleterious has mounted enough to convince even James Coleman, who originally was the principal sociological witness on the other side.

In the third substantive area that Glazer analyzes, residential "segregation," the case is more equivocal. As Glazer notes, the term *segregation* contains a bias, for the condition in question, concentration, can result—apart from fortuitous patterning—either from a conscious restriction from the outside, or from what might well be termed congregation, the deliberate choice of individuals to live among people like themselves. Though statistically the two are often difficult to distinguish, the tendency of the federal authorities has been to regard any racial concentration as the consequence of discrimination and to enlist public policy in the service of breaking it up wherever it happens to occur.

Glazer's position is that in all areas—employment, education, and housing—the proper public objective is not the quota system or some approximation of it, but rather equal opportunity for individuals as individuals. That is what the Constitution stipulates, what most Americans demand of their society, and what has enabled ethnic minorities, including blacks, to move up. This last assertion he bolsters with an account of how ethnic patterns arose in American history and how they are likely to evolve in the future. He omits from his analysis of reverse discrimination any consideration of how affirmative action affects women. Nor does he deal fully with such harmful effects of reverse discrimination as the recent unspoken assumption that any black college student or jobholder, no matter how well qualified the particular person might be, is there only as a result of preferential treatment.

How will affirmative action, which has been in effect for only about five years, influence American society over the long run? Glazer seems to regard it as a serious but temporary aberration, and I hope he is right. But one should take into account that the institutions developed to accommodate new guidelines are likely to persevere longer than the policies themselves, for they are producing a new type of bureaucracy that will, like any vested interest, resist change toward the *status quo ante*. Israel Zangwill's slogan of "the melting pot" has long since given way to Horace Kallen's "cultural pluralism," and affirmative action may now take us also beyond "a nation of nations" to an ethnic and sexual battlefield regulated by proportional representation and quotas.

Whatever its faults of omission, however, *Affirmative Discrimination* as it stands demonstrates once again that Nathan Glazer is one of the country's best social analysts. Intelligence, his first and most important working tool, shines

WILLIAM PETERSEN *is Robert Lazarus Professor of Social Demography at Ohio State University and the author of* Japanese Americans, *among other works.*

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A Poet's Life

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS: POET FROM JERSEY. By REED WHITTEMORE. *Houghton Mifflin. 404 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by JOHN ROMANO

THE story of American literary modernism, as told until a few years ago, was doubly rare among intellectual histories: it was colorful and simple. At its center was the search for an American self, taking paradoxical form in expatriation, wandering, and exile. In part, the drifters and exiles of the 20's were glamorous to their readers because they were glamorous to themselves —a statement true for Hemingway and Fitzgerald, of course, but no less true for Pound, Eliot, or Gertrude Stein, who relished in their different ways the Jamesian drama of the decision not to go home. There were modernists, meanwhile, who never left home in the first place, like William Carlos Williams, whose one adult stint abroad, in 1924, was mainly as a tourist with a better-than-average list of people to look up. But while the image of the modernist as the "lost" or disaffected *émigré* predominated, the work of such homebodies as Williams and Wallace Stevens remained on the fringes of the modernist canon.

JOHN ROMANO, *whose article "The New Laureates" appeared in our October 1975 issue, teaches English at Columbia.*

On either side of his six months abroad, home for Williams was Rutherford, New Jersey, where he was born in 1883. He grew up in a middle-class household dominated by his grandmother, a fierce old English widow whom the poet would cast, later, in the role of muse. His parents passed on to him some random literary and cultural enthusiasms, and were prosperous enough to provide an education, first in Switzerland, then at New York's Horace Mann School, and then, beginning in 1901, at the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania. At Penn began the lifelong friendship with Ezra Pound, an undergraduate from Idaho. At Penn, too, Williams undertook what he would sustain for most of his life, the simultaneous careers of poetry and medicine.

The earliest Williams poems were undistinguished; he later recalled one of them as "an ode—after Keats, I presume—on of all things the skunk cabbage." It was not until World War I that his poetry first revealed its immense promise, which subsisted mainly in the poet's willingness to bring his sensibility to bear, with revolutionary directness, on the commonplace and the ugly. If what resulted was not a Keatsian ode on the skunk cabbage, it was yet a new, American poetry of what was hardly more pleasant: the industrial suburbs of New Jersey that surrounded the Passaic River. "Ugliness," writes Reed Whittemore in his new biography of the poet, was for Williams "a regular font for the poetic." It "possessed him, drove him to his typewriter." In ugliness, according to Whittemore's fine reading of an early poem, "The Wanderer" (1914), Williams's grandmother-muse assured him of finding not only the "real" and the "modern," but also and especially the "beautiful," in search of which Pound had by that time wandered from Philadelphia to the Grand Canal.

Prominent in Whittemore's biography is the image of Dr. Williams in his attic at 9 Ridge Road, stealing time from his family and medical practice to turn out poems, plays, and prose uninterruptedly during the 20's and 30's. Though he had a following from the begin-

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ning—largely because of his association with "little magazines," then as now the lifeblood of American poetry—it was not until the publication of the first books of his long poem "Paterson," in the late 40's, that a wider public recognition of Williams began. By 1953 he had won the National Book Award and the Bollingen Prize. Williams's last book of poems, *Pictures from Breughel*, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1963, the year of his death. But even then, as the poet was bitterly aware, his work had not attracted sustained attention from the academic and professional critics.

In the last few years, the poetry, at least, has come increasingly to be acknowledged for what it surely is: among the work of American poets in this century, singularly powerful and alive. Behind this judgment stands a revaluation of the myth of a rootless modernism. As critics so diverse as Richard Ellmann, Hugh Kenner, and Harold Bloom endeavor to establish the importance to modernism of homeland, tradition, and "influence," it is no wonder that not only Williams's art, but also his life, with its complex but unequivocal commitment to what Whittemore calls the "normalcies"—paying the bills, serving on committees—has come to seem significant and brave.

In its attitude toward Williams's modernism, Whittemore's *William Carlos Williams: Poet from Jersey* partakes in its own way of the current revisionary impulse. The chapter he calls "Moment of the Twenties" is a good example. Williams spent most of that decade in his attic, producing, among other things, the book of historical-biographical sketches called *In the American Grain*. It is an extraordinarily difficult text, with an odd mixture of inwardness and historical narrative, and neither the conditions of its writing nor the nature of its project seem typical of its particular literary "moment." But Whittemore's acute reading shows not only the close relation between Williams's personal tensions and fears and the "anti-puritan obsession" of the text, but also the extent to which, as a consequence of that relation, the book is indeed a "20's" artifact: anti-puritanism is after all the animating impulse of, say, *Tender Is the Night*, though Williams's treatment is both more heated and more thoughtful than the novel's—closer, as Whittemore chooses to say, to Lawrence than to Fitzgerald.

It is not, precisely, a critical biography that Whittemore has written. Few individual works are studied in detail. Rather, the strength of this biography lies in its illuminating account of Williams in relation to the literary movements with which he had more or less to do at various points in his development, beginning with Imagism and Cubism in the early 1900's, through Objectivism and Social Realism, to the Black Mountain and San Francisco schools of the 50's. Whittemore is at his most skillful in demonstrating the poet's participation in, and detachment from, the long parade of such "isms." The drama of any writer's career is the emergence of his individual voice from the competition of attachments, tastes, models. In Williams's case it is the drama of his near-approach to poetic ideologies, his unfailing openness to their value, and his ultimate reassertion, after each encounter, of a unique poetic identity.

If ever Williams was in danger of being swallowed up along the way, it was not by a literary theory, but rather by those very "normalcies" he made a point of cultivating. Undeniably it was hard to live in the Passaic ugliness, and work among its diseases, while keeping a full set of artistic sensibilities finely tuned. But probably it was harder still to live the life of a middle-class professional, the life to which Williams was well-suited in many ways, without losing, in the dullness of comfort, the sharp edge of personality—the sharpness that was both dangerous and essential to his achievement as a poet. For all Williams's talk about "variable feet," for all his claims for the primacy of technical perfection—which Whittemore quite properly scants—Williams's poems matter less for any sophistications of form than for their willingness to court disruption by the intrusion of shapeless, shape-destroying reality. They hold themselves permanently in a condition of risk. What seems ultimately ad-

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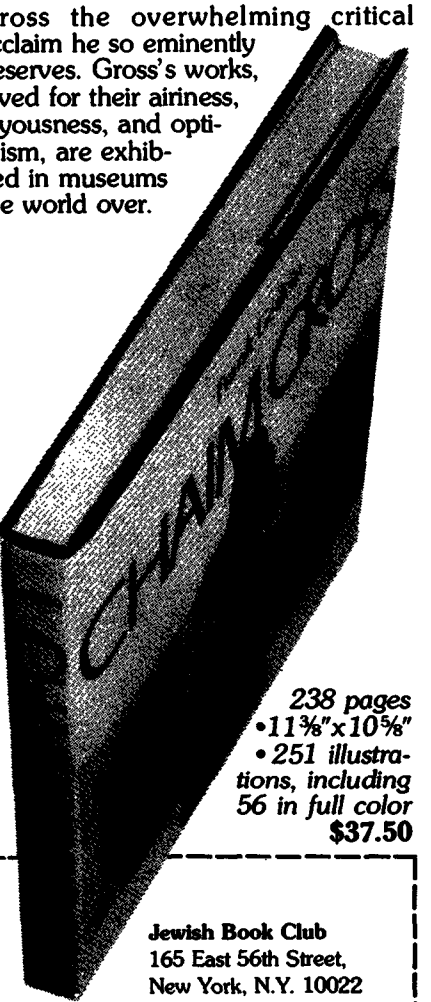

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mirable about Williams the modernist was not that he remained at home, which may after all have been the easy thing for him to do, but that he remained, as the poems testify, in so unaccommodating a frame of mind; that, though he never revolted, neither was he lulled to sleep.

Whittemore's book is interesting and valuable; the main objections are to its style. Its plainspokenness, for example, reflecting Williams's own famous anti-academicism, is laudable in itself, but occasionally results in oversimplification and pointless flippancy. As for the facts of Williams's life, they have nowhere else been so completely gathered and arranged. Whittemore clears up for the first time the story of how Williams's appointment as Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress was delayed and finally made impossible by the political climate of 1952. On the whole, however, there is a curious sparseness of anecdote, and Whittemore does seem at times to be writing with an air of secrecy, as though entrusted with confidences he cannot betray. He has apparently had access to a great deal of material not available before now, but seems to feel that the moment for complete openness about Williams's personal life has not yet come. Until it does, the present biography is certainly the most intelligent and thorough account we have of the poet's life.

Due Process, Soviet Style

COURTS OF TERROR: SOVIET CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND JEWISH EMIGRATION. By TELFORD TAYLOR, with ALAN DERSHOWITZ, GEORGE FLETCHER, LEON LIPSON, and MELVIN STEIN. *Knopf. 187 pp. $6.95.*

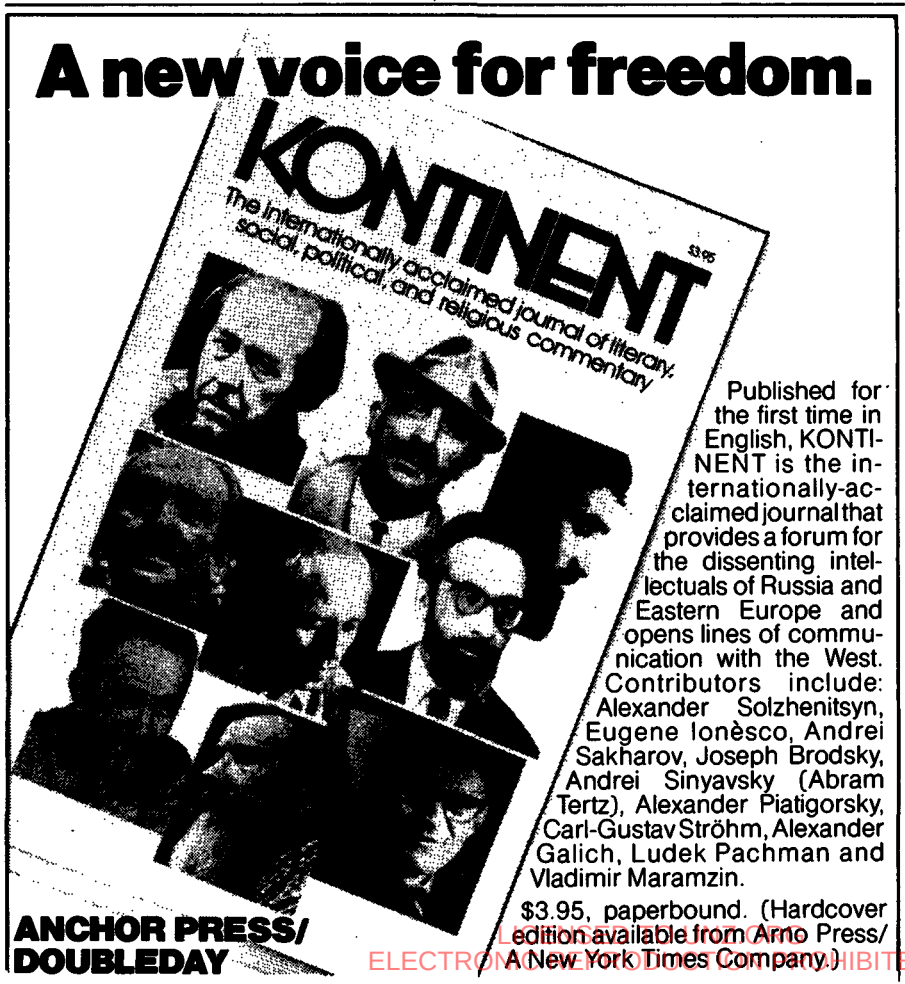
Reviewed by JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN

ACCORDING to the 1960 Soviet criminal code, no person may be subjected to criminal responsibility and punishment unless he has committed a crime (defined as a socially dangerous *act*). This provision of the 1960 code, along with many other procedural and substantive reforms enacted at that time, marked an advance over the 1926 code which had remained in force throughout Stalin's regime. Nevertheless, to this day Soviet dissidents endure judicial abuses. A major element in the dissident strategy has been to embarrass the regime by exposing its disregard for its own established legal requirements. Valery Chalidze, for example, in *To Defend These Rights*, has described how a group of dissidents tried to make law the principal instrument for change in the Soviet Union. Activists like Andrei Sakharov, Andrei Tverdokhlebov, and others associated with the Moscow Human Rights Committee have prepared documents showing how Soviet courts have disregarded procedural norms in the trials of political nonconformists. During the last ten years especially, a main tactic of the dissidents has been to distribute unofficial transcripts of trial proceedings in order to deflate the regime's democratic pretensions. These efforts have now been joined by American legal scholars.

In the fall of 1973, a group of lawyers headed by Telford Taylor took up the cases of nineteen Soviet prisoners, almost all of them Jews who had been convicted of spurious charges following their applications for visas to Israel. In each case the defendants were already serving their prison terms; their trials were long since over and their appeals had been rejected. Nonetheless, Taylor and his colleagues decided to review the details of the trials and to compare them with the procedural and substantive requirements of Soviet law as defined in the appropriate legal codes. In order to accomplish this, the group spent several weeks in Israel, obtaining powers of attorney from defendants' relatives and interviewing people who had attended the trials before emigrating.

Still, they had no assurance that the Soviet authorities would accept their briefs. So in March 1974 Taylor, George Fletcher (of the UCLA Law School), and Alan Dershowitz (of the Harvard Law School) went to Moscow, hoping to gain an in-

JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN *is New England Coordinator for Amnesty International.*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terview with the Soviet Procurator General, Roman Rudenko, whom Taylor had worked with thirty years before in Nuremberg when they represented their countries as prosecutors at the Nazi war-crimes trials. Although Rudenko was unable to meet them, they received permission to submit petitions on behalf of the prisoners from the Deputy Procurator General, M.P. Malyarov. Three months later, Taylor and Leon Lipson (from Yale) returned to Moscow with the committee's review of the cases. The authorities accepted them. A few days later, Taylor was informed by Malyarov that no judicial errors had been committed, although it would have been impossible in so short a time to compare the official records with the Americans' findings and also to investigate the prison conditions faced by the defendants, a subject for which Taylor and his colleagues had particular concern. Their discreet professional efforts having failed to secure relief for the prisoners, Taylor and his group decided to publicize their project.

Courts of Terror contains excerpts from the briefs and the full text of four legal memoranda that Taylor's group submitted. In a subdued, logical manner, these documents confirm what Soviet dissidents have said all along—that Soviet justice remains subordinate to ideological priorities. Defendants were denied the right to choose their own counsel; defense witnesses were not permitted to appear, and even a witness for the prosecution was forcibly removed from the court when his testimony became favorable to the defendant. In one trial the court accused the defendant of not being a 100-percent Soviet man and used this "fact" as evidence of his criminal, anti-Soviet motivation.

As Taylor observes in the preface: "It was state policy to discourage Jewish emigration without appearing to prohibit it." Even though over 100,000 Jews have left the Soviet Union during the past five years, the regime likes to remind its citizens that it still retains control of their destiny. To do that, all it needs are a few choice victims.

Alexander Feldman was one such victim. Despite repeated rejections, he had persisted in his struggle to emigrate to Israel. In the fall of 1973 he was arrested, then convicted of hooliganism on the charge that he had knocked a cake out of a woman's hands and addressed her obscenely. His trial was equally contrived. All the prosecution witnesses were connected with the Kiev police department. Feldman was denied permission to call three friends who, he claimed, would corroborate his testimony. When his defense attorney revealed inconsistencies in the alleged victim's testimony, he was not permitted to examine her further. These judicial irregularities contradict provisions of Soviet law, as well as provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Nonetheless, Feldman's appeal was rejected and he will have to complete his three-and-a-half year term in a corrective labor

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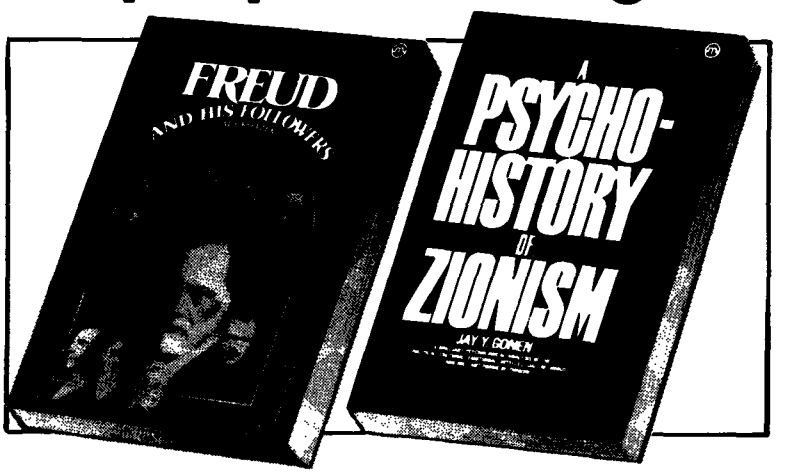

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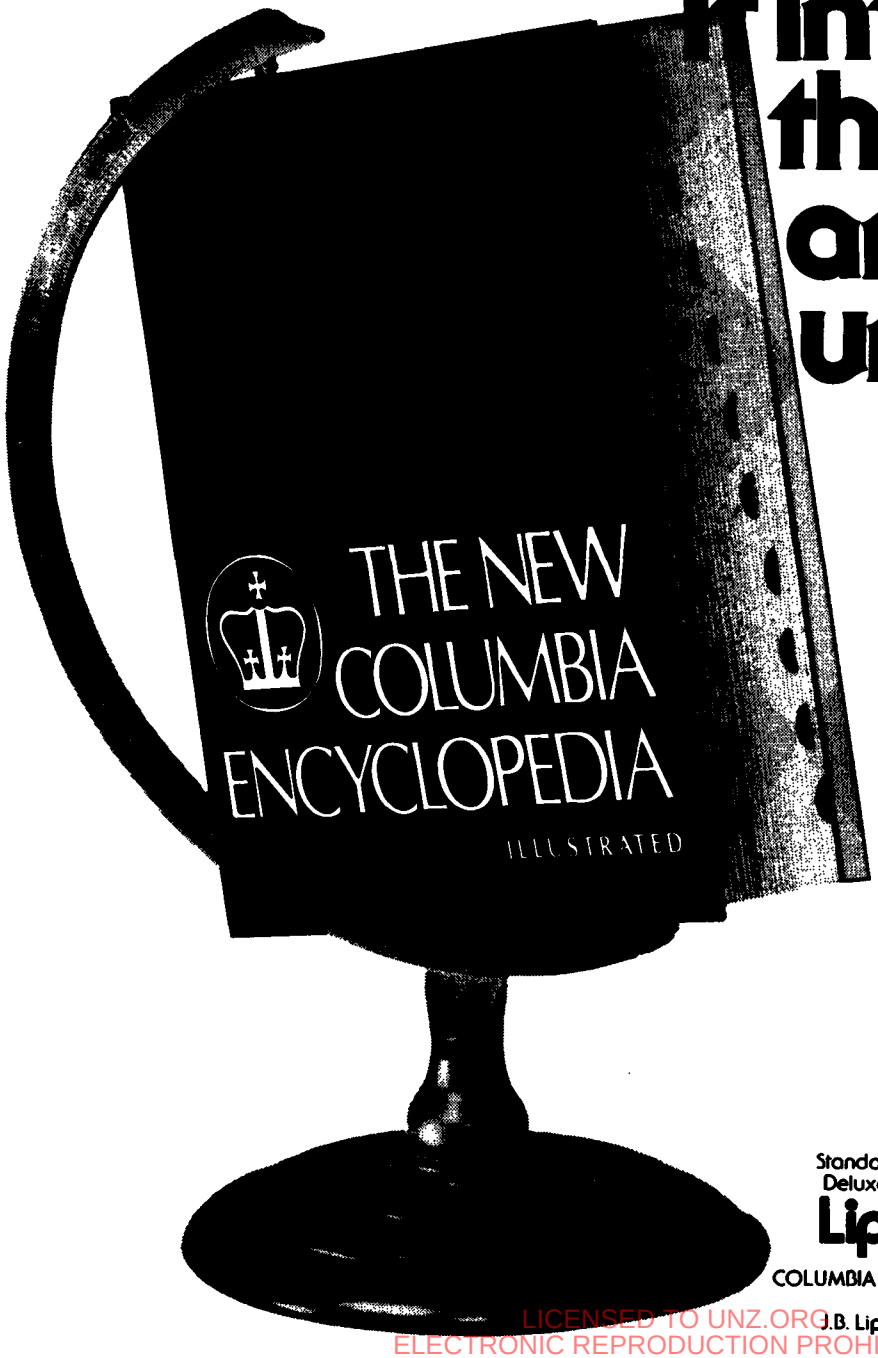

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colony with an "intensified regimen."

In addition to a handful of lesser-known cases like that of Feldman, Taylor's committee also reviewed the judicial procedures employed at the four famous trials surrounding the June 1970 attempt of a group of Soviet Jews to hijack a plane to Sweden. Here again, they found deliberate disregard for judicial requirements. Two issues in particular deserve attention. Although several of the defendants did intend to hijack the plane, they were charged with treason and theft of state property on an especially large scale; both offenses carry capital penalties. But under Soviet law, there is no justification for turning the attempted hijacking of a plane into either of those charges. According to Taylor they should have been charged with attempting to leave the country without permission of the proper authorities, and perhaps with an offense involving misuse of state property. (At the time, there was no law explicitly against hijacking.)

ALTHOUGH the efforts of Taylor and his colleagues have not brought immediate comfort to the prisoners, the Soviet regime has recently grown more sensitive to criticism of its legal procedures. Last December, Sergei Kovalyov, a prominent biologist and a founding member of the Moscow chapter of Amnesty International, was convicted of anti-Soviet agitation for distributing the *Chronicle of Current Events*, the unofficial journal which circulates among human-rights activists in the Soviet Union. At his trial, Kovalyov experienced the standard difficulties; he was refused counsel of his choice, and witnesses he wished to call were denied access to the courtroom. Nevertheless, for the first time at a Soviet political trial, the prosecution made a half-hearted attempt to show the allegedly slanderous nature of the *Chronicle*'s reports. Seven witnesses were called, including the psychiatrist of a leading dissident who was incarcerated at the time in a Soviet mental hospital. Acting as his own defense attorney, Kovalyov was allowed to cross-examine the witnesses until his questions became too pointed. He then decided not to participate further in this judicial charade. Still, what is significant about his trial remains the fact that the Soviet regime did feel the need to substantiate the charges against him, in however deceitful a manner. In addition, there have since appeared numerous reports in official English-language Soviet journals attesting to the "proper" handling of Kovalyov's conviction—an unusually defensive gesture for a regime which normally disdains to justify its handling of dissidents.

As Taylor makes clear, "The true quality of a judicial system is best measured by its resistance to stress, whether caused by community, racial, or other prejudice, or by the pressure of state political policies and interests." While Taylor's book is a modest account of Soviet injustice, the service he and his colleagues have performed deserves wider attention than it has so far received in the American press.

Past and Present

HISTORY: REMEMBERED, RECOVERED, INVENTED. By BERNARD LEWIS. *Princeton University Press. 128 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by EDWARD N. LUTTWAK

IF the task of the poet is to interpret our souls to ourselves, and that of the national historian to transmit our past to our present, the historian of foreign nations has the more difficult task of recounting the past of others, and explaining it to our own present. The difficulty is compounded when the historian's chosen subject is not merely a different nationality, but a different civilization. The narrative procedures may be no different and the selection of the evidence presents the same problems, but it is much more difficult to represent accurately the ideals and ideas which inform human conduct across the cultural barrier. Such ideas cannot be baldly stated, for

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then they would be meaningless or bound to be misunderstood. The transcultural historian cannot limit himself to the translation of words without in some sense betraying the truth. Instead he must interpret, and then explain, by evocation and suggestion rather than direct statement.

To write the history of other civilizations, then, means to contend with difficulties at every turn, but if the difficulties are confronted, there is a hidden compensation in the endeavor: with the search for valid interpretations of the ideas of others, an illuminating perspective on our own may be acquired. Having long since turned the peculiar difficulties of the transcultural historian to his own full advantage, Bernard Lewis has emerged as a historian *tout court*, and of the very first rank. On the solid foundation of the documentary research of his specialized work, Lewis has built an edifice of interpretative studies of Middle Eastern history which have given him a worldwide reputation even among those entirely unfamiliar with his writings on the Ottomans and the Turks. Among his many significant works are *The Middle East and the West*, *The Arabs in History*, and *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. Now that Lewis has himself been translated from the University of London to Princeton, we have among us not only one of the world's great scholars, but a master of English style in whose writing great elegance and extreme verbal precision are found in easy communion with an exceedingly subtle sense of the ironical.

This short book, the revised text of the Gottesman Lectures given at Yeshiva University, is a work not of history but of historiography. Lewis is here concerned not with what happened but rather with the variegated processes whereby the past is recorded or forgotten, recovered, explained, or explained away: through folk memory and ceremonial commemoration; through the reconstruction of archeological, epigraphic, numismatic, or textual evidence; or by the energetic interpretation of facts, in order to make the recalci-

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trant past conform to the political order, or collective self-image, which dominates the present.

The search for identity in real or imagined history is a powerful and universal impulse. But like the quest for identity of the alienated man, it may create more problems than it solves: the past identity may not conform to expectations, and different historical identities may be in conflict. Lewis, for instance, writes of the phenomenon of present-day Egyptian territorial patriotism, inspired by the recovery of the pharaonic past, and of the tension between the "pharaonic" and the Islamic identity in the Egyptian psyche of today. The Koranic version of the Exodus story symbolizes this tension, for the Koran sides with the Jews, the favored of God, while the Pharaoh—the first anti-Zionist—is cast as the villain. During the 1967 pre-war crisis—at a time of high and rising Islamic fervor—an Egyptian writer found it necessary to justify the policy of the ancient Pharaoh against the Koranic verdict in an article for the mass-circulation paper, *Al Ahram*.

While some self-defined human groups suffer deep anxieties because they lack any historic identity at all, and others have to endure the clash of two conflicting identities, the modern process of national definition, inspired by 19th-century European ideas, has in some cases imposed a need to choose among multiple historical identities. In this book Lewis returns to the fascinating case of modern Turkey, where no fewer than three identities competed for adoption—the Ottoman, at once political and religious, which embraced multiple languages, many peoples, and much geography; the "Anatolian," which corresponded to the geography of post-1922 Turkey, but whose borders would not frame the ancestral home of the Turks, relative newcomers; and the Turkic, which correlated with language and people, but not with territory. Each of these identities implied a national program for Ataturk's Turkey: imperial revanchism for the Ottoman identity, expansionist pan-Turkism for the ethnic identity, and territorial patriotism for the geographic identity. Ataturk, no Nasser, chose the last, preferring to annex the unresisting past rather than to attempt the recovery of the vast lands of the Ottoman empire, or to contest Soviet control of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Thus all the civilizations that had occupied Anatolia back to Hittite times (minus Greeks, Jews, and Armenians) were granted retrospective naturalization into Turkish citizenship, by constitutional fiat. The alternative identities would have launched Turkey on a course of open-ended conflict.

In the opening chapter, "Masada and Cyrus," Lewis discusses the ways in which the memory of things past is sometimes lost and then recovered. He explains why the rabbinic tradition preserved no mention of Masada—the desert fortress where in 73 C.E. a desperate group of Jewish men and women committed suicide rather than surrender to a besieging force of Roman soldiers—and he describes how the event was recovered in Jewish history (and Jewish popular consciousness) from secular history, before the place itself was recovered and excavated.

Seeking to explain the poverty of Jewish historiography, Lewis focuses on the deliberate opposition of the rabbis of late antiquity who, drawing their own authority from the legitimacy of the revealed oral law and its interpretation, were naturally inimical to the developmental analysis which is intrinsic to the writing of history. Rabbinic culture, which became the sole culture of a people who for centuries were without power, was preoccupied with spiritual and legalistic themes (and with the tension between the two). By contrast, the political and military themes which form the natural core of historiography were foreign to Jewish life. Until European ideas of nationality came to pervade Jewish consciousness, Jewish identity was primarily religious and not national. It was only when European-style nationalism was internalized among Jews—a process which Zionism promoted and made operation-

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al—that there was a corresponding awakening of interest in ancient Jewish history. In Israel, of course, this takes a territorial form and is manifest in the mass interest in archeology.

In this short book, Bernard Lewis introduces the reader to the essential problem of historiography, the relationship between the surviving evidence of the past and the preoccupations of the present which induce us to take an interest in the past—or rather in carefully selected segments of the collective past. At once deeply learned and quite genuinely entertaining, this short work is a gem.

Philosopher of Civility

ON HUMAN CONDUCT. BY MICHAEL OAKESHOTT. *Oxford. 352 pp. $18.50.*

Reviewed by JOSIAH LEE AUSPITZ

On Human Conduct is the most important work in the philosophy of politics to have been published in a long time. It will need to be taken into account in any future discussions of the theory of justice, the development of the modern state, the nature of historical explanation, the basis of political experience, the general theory of human action, and the character and practical relevance of theoretical inquiry itself. Its central essay, "On the Civil Condition," presents in seventy-five exceptionally concentrated pages a philosophcial treatment of what is commonly called "the rule of law" in terms that more richly repay close study than those to be found in any similar essay published in our language in this century.

Those who have followed closely the work of Michael Oakeshott will not be surprised at this achievement, to which he has devoted himself since his retirement in 1968 from the University Professorship of Political Science at the London School of Economics. The seeds of this work—indeed, the necessity for it—have long been evident in certain anomalies in the discussions of history, science, and practice in his first book, *Experience and Its Modes* (1933), and in his exploration of the grounds for resolving them in the essays collected in *Rationalism in Politics* (1962). Even his uncollected essays and incidental reviews—his first writings in the philosophy of religion in the 1920's, his important statement on "The Concept of a Philosophical Jurisprudence" (1938), his defense of the humanities against the claims of politics before he joined the army in World War II, his several critical essays on Thomas Hobbes,* his occasional writings on education—have suggested both greater reserves of insight and a remarkable persistence in finding discursive form for them. *On Human Conduct* is thus the outcome of many years devoted to reflection on the place of politics in the totality of human experience.

It is not an easy book. While advancing his own point of view, Oakeshott is often simultaneously disposing of unnamed authors and schools of thought. Yet, following the maxim of the purist that philosophy gains no authority from citation, he allows himself few digressions, footnotes, or critical remarks that do not advance his own point of view. To appreciate the path he treads, then, requires more than casual interest in what is being superseded. Still, the general reader can also study the book for its own argument, which is in any case the real test. Oakeshott's accomplishment is not that he has gone deeper than others in this or that respect, but that he has made an enduring statement on a few very important issues.

THERE are three essays in the book. The first, "On the Theoretical Understanding of Human Conduct," begins with a case for the

* All but the first of these have now been collected in *Hobbes on Civil Association*, University of California Press, 162 pp., $11.00.

JOSIAH LEE AUSPITZ, *who reviewed* Anarchy, State, and Utopia *by Robert Nozick in our September 1975 issue, is an Independent Research Fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities for 1975-76.*

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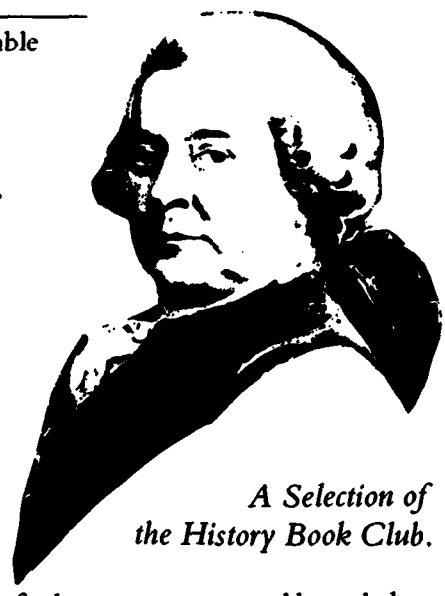

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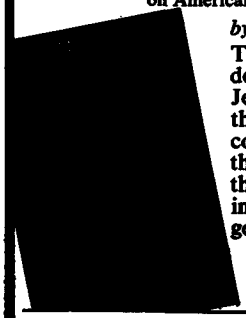

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unity and purity of theorizing as a commitment. Whether one is engaged in history, science, or philosophy, discursive theorizing is the attempt to make the world intelligible in terms of its organizing conditions. Though it may lead indirectly to changes in the world, it is not itself pursued as an attempt at social amelioration or moral uplift, and a theoretical understanding is not, in Oakeshott's view, an adequate qualification for giving practical advice.

Philosophy differs from other kinds of theorizing only in being more radically skeptical—in never accepting any stopping place as final. Science and history, on the other hand, work within fairly stable interpretative constructs, or what are more fashionably called paradigms. Science sees the world in terms of process, and human action as "behavior," externally observable regularities. History sees the world in terms of practices, and human action as "conduct," moral and prudential choices which are meaningful to the person acting.

Oakeshott devotes the main part of this first essay to elucidating the character of conduct. He sets forth its "postulates," that is, the categories one must accept to talk about it: human agency and interaction, deliberation, persuasion, explanation, and the notion of a practice as providing a context that makes individual choice meaningful. In so doing, he presents the basis for spotting individuality in experience. To observe individual style requires, he shows, a vocabulary systematically different from that of the natural or behavioral scientist. Oakeshott thus reasserts the integrity of what German writers have called "the human sciences" and what we more often group within the "humanities": history, cultural anthropology, and literary criticism. Historical understanding is *par excellence* the theoretical mode for relating individual performances to the context that charges them with meaning. It provides, in Oakeshott's view, explanations not in terms of cause and effect, probabilistic relations, or behavioral covering laws, but in terms of "contingent relations"—the intelligent and intelligible responses of one agent to the conduct of others in a practical context. Oakeshott promises a fully developed discussion of contingency in a forthcoming collection of historiographical essays, but there is already enough in his dense concluding pages to show that he is well on the road to a rigorous defense of history as a humane discipline.

His first essay is designed also to fork in another, complementary direction: toward a powerful argument for the integrity of civil politics. It contains brief sketches of morality and religion sufficient to suggest that politics should not be confused with either of them. Oakeshott's second essay, "On the Civil Condition," then provides a positive statement of the defining marks of political experience.

The distinctive character of politics, Oakeshott believes, consists in a procedural sensibility that has no exact parallel elsewhere. In politics, one feels a moral obligation to obey existing laws at the same time that one is bargaining for an authoritative change in them. One feels an inner demand to submit to rules which are not instrumental to one's own purposes and of which one may actively disapprove. Politics thus requires a "disciplined imagination," a delicate combination of submission with criticism, a well-developed facility for putting one's demands for change in the form of legislative proposals that can be integrated into an existing body of authoritative procedure.

This procedural sensibility Oakeshott calls "civility," which he uses in the old-fashioned sense to mean not the virtues of civilization and good manners but those of citizenship and civil order. As he uses it, civility is most nearly synonymous with the loose expression, "the rule of law." It connotes a mode of association based not on any shared purpose or organic sense of community, but on a common recognition of the authority of law and the prerequisites for sustaining it. Oakeshott shows that if law is to command an inner sense of obligation, it cannot be merely instrumental to some managerial objective, to the favoring of some person, faction, or interest, or to the imposition of a given re-

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ligion or morality on a disparate citizenry. To the extent that one treats a civil order as if it were a corporate enterprise—a church, club, estate, or business—the formal equality of its citizens will be sacrificed to the common mission, the law will become merely instrumental to a "national purpose," and the basis of obedience will depreciate either to blind obedience or to cold instrumental calculation.

As he did with conduct, Oakeshott presents the "postulates" of civil association, those organizing categories which one must accept to speak the language of civility: authority, obligation, adjudication, law, citizenship, justice, equity, legislation, ruling, enforcement, politics, public and private concerns. Many others, of course, have writen intelligently on these topics; Oakeshott's contribution is to have drawn them together without reference to specific historical events or institutions. In so doing he enables us to understand them in terms not of their contingent but of their ideal relations. He presents them not as isolated, empirical phenomena but as a coherent ensemble, a mode of human association. He thus shows civility to have achieved an ideal character independent of the circumstances which have given rise to it in the past few centuries of Western history.

This constitutes a forceful denial of both "realistic" and sociological views of law as a mere response to historical circumstances or pressing social needs. It constitutes an equally strong rebuke to those who attempt to derive workable principles of justice from natural law or some other universalistic or transcendental standard. One may certainly believe in such moral standards and use them to lend that certain majesty and mystery without which, it is often held, there can be no widespread sense of legal obligation—indeed, Oakeshott himself sees the notion of a divine lawgiver as an important theological adumbration of the rule of non-instrumental law in human affairs. But once a practice achieves an ideal character, its historical and doctrinal supports become mere antecedents. Just as modern science has achieved a coherence independent

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of its origins in neo-Platonism and the craft traditions of medieval guilds, so civility, Oakeshott believes, can now be discussed philosophically independently of God, natural law, the Magna Carta, the Napoleonic code, and the Declaration of Independence.

That he is nevertheless abundantly aware of the contingencies surrounding the emergence of civility is clear from his concluding piece, "On the Character of a Modern European State." This is the only essay in the book that one can hope to digest in a single reading. For it is not a densely written philosophical treatise but a learned, witty, illuminating, and opinionated excursus in the history of ideas. In a bold improvisation on a theme from Maitland, Oakeshott traces the contrasting notions of civil and enterprise association to two concepts in Roman law, *societas* and *universitas*. These two views of the state have been "sweet enemies," shaping the antinomies of European political thought. Oakeshott's review of their development provides the general reader with an accessible introduction to his views.

OAKESHOTT's two previous books have each sold only a few hundred copies in the United States. Recently he has been introduced to a wider audience through the good offices of William F. Buckley, Jr., who invited him to deliver the guest lecture at the twentieth-anniversary celebration of the *National Review* (see "Talking Politics," *National Review*, December 5, 1975). In his opening remarks Oakeshott made clear that he was not a house philosopher. He noted that such labels as conservative and liberal, Left and Right, now serve only to confuse political discourse—this to the evident dismay of those who had come to applaud fulminations against liberalism, forced busing, the rising crime rate, and the decline of the West.

Yet a disposition that can be called deeply conservative does shape Oakeshott's entire work. In order not to confuse it with the motley conservatisms seeking public notice, one might call Oakeshott's attitude traditionalist. It consists simply in the desire to hold on to what experience has taught us to cherish. It is a disposition that we all share to some degree. In those activities in which we prefer the tested and familiar to the abstractly desirable, we are, in his sense, dispositionally conservative.

In times of rapid change reflective men of affairs often invoke deep and elusive forces to buttress a conservative disposition, after the manner of Burke (or of Oakeshott in some of his earlier essays). But a discursively philosophical mind must find more precise and systematic grounds for justifying a tradition: the philosopher cannot be satisfied until he has defined what it is that needs to be conserved and has shown it to be logically defensible and capable of adaptation.

Hence Oakeshott's emphasis on "ideal character." By elucidating meaningful conduct, civility, theorizing, and historical explanation as frameworks for ordering experience, he shows them to have a conceptual integrity that can survive changes in circumstance. And he suggests a coherent relation among them, so that one unable to grasp the proper uses of theory will also be incapacitated for making law, writing history, or appreciating individuality.

Oakeshott thus follows those philosophers like Plato and Hegel in the West and Mencius in the East, for whom a "conservative" disposition had its denouement in a radical philosophical "idealism." He has pressed his views to a level at which those who differ from them—and there will be few modern intellectuals who can share Oakeshott's sympathies—have the obligation to differ philosophically, by sketching alternatives to his notions of modality, ideality, theorizing, and language.*

Certainly it will take more than merely doctrinal opposition to supplant the most striking contribu-

*Scholarly discussion is just beginning. Later this year the journal *Political Theory* will publish a special issue on Oakeshott. For discussions of his earlier work and a comprehensive bibliography, see *Politics and Experience: Essays Presented to Professor Michael Oakeshott on the Occasion of His Retirement*, edited by Preston King and B.C. Parekh, Cambridge University Press, 1968.

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tion of *On Human Conduct*: an elucidation of law as a civilized achievement. Oakeshott makes no concessions either to pragmatic or to supernatural justifications of civil order. For him the unvarnished truth about the rule of law is that, like any other institutional achievement, it must be continually held in one's head. It is a fragile artifice that can be lost merely by not being practiced.

The key to its preservation lies in the ability to make a fine discrimination: though moral absolutes and instrumental judgments are essential to all conduct, they cannot provide the organizing categories of civil conduct. In this simple and in many ways unsatisfying disjunction lies one of the major contributions of Western civilization. Like Western science or symphonic music, the rule of law can now travel elsewhere. And there is no guarantee that it will survive in the lands of its origin if its defining conditions are forgotten in expedient calculations or submerged in higher-law rhetoric. Michael Oakeshott has performed the inestimable service of elucidating the conditions of justice as civility without invoking either mythic particulars or inflated universals. He has done the best a philosopher can do to preserve a cultivated ideal—he has enabled us to see clearly what is intrinsic to it.

Myth-Making

POWER SHIFT: THE RISE OF THE SOUTHERN RIM AND ITS CHALLENGE TO THE EASTERN ESTABLISHMENT. By KIRKPATRICK SALE. *Random House. 362 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by JEANE KIRKPATRICK

THE notion that the various geographic regions of the United States are inhabited by people who share some distinctive interests and perspectives is familiar enough; indeed, antagonism to the cultural distinctiveness and political influence of the Northeast is a basic premise of the authentic Populist tradition (of which George Wallace, not Fred Harris, is the leading contemporary exponent). And although most close observers believe the effects of sectionalism on American politics have declined in recent decades, the changing character of the South has revived interest in the geography of partisanship. In his *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Kevin Phillips predicted that "the upcoming cycle of American politics is likely to match a dominant Republican party based in the heartland, South, and California against a minority Democratic party based in the Northeast and the Pacific Northwest (and encompassing Southern as well as Northern Negroes)." William Rusher has noted that the "conservative coalition," which forms the centerpiece of his latest book, *The Making of a New Majority Party*, is potentially dominant outside the "Northeast and a few corridors"; and the New York *Times* has recently manifested a suggestive preoccupation with the consequences of the migration of people and industry out of the North into the "Sunbelt." But none of these could really be said to duplicate or even to foreshadow Kirkpatrick Sale's political melodrama.

In *Power Shift*, geography and demography give way to mysticism. Two geo-cultural "forces" are locked in a struggle for control of America's destiny: the bad guys in white Stetsons (the "Cowboys") and the good guys in Ivy League suits (the "Yankees"). The one force, deriving from the "Southern Rim," is based (Sale tells us) on agribusiness, defense, advanced technology, oil and gas, real estate, tourism, and leisure. Its culture is dominated by the growth ethic and its politics by the "three R's": rightism, racism, and repression. Its recent contributions to the nation's political life include Lyndon Johnson, the Vietnam war, Richard Nixon and Watergate, George Wallace, the Christian Crusaders, Barry Goldwater, and assorted other ills. "Rimsters," as Sale calls persons who live in

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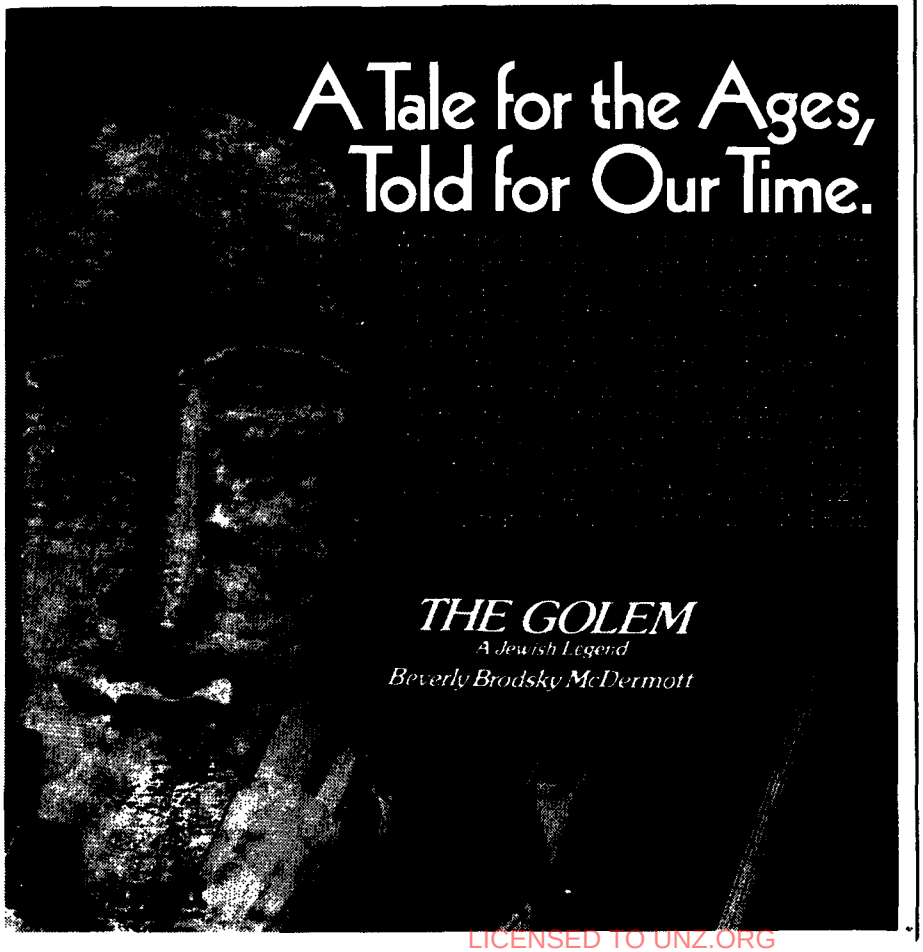

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North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and the southern portion of Nevada and California, acquire from their frontier roots a love of the land, an enthusiasm for growth, a propensity for force, and the "hidebound and conservative" attitudes of the Southern Baptists—"good and evil simplism, intolerance, anti-modernism, insularity, emotionalism, and xenophobia." Thus tainted, Rimsters veer naturally to the Right: to "virulent super-patriotism" (Sale knows no other kind), to "hysterical" anti-Communism (again, the only kind he knows), to rigid cold-war postures. The full extent of "Riminian rightism" is displayed in the U.S. Congress:

> Who led the fight against a consumer-protection agency? Senators Sam Ervin of North Carolina and James Allen of Alabama. Who fought down efforts to establish stronger pesticide controls? Representative Jamie Whitten of Mississippi. Who stopped reform action against strip miners? Representative Craig Hosmer of California. Who spoke against federal money for abortion clincs? Representative Dewey Bartlett of Oklahoma. Who protected the billboard lobby from unwanted regulations? Representative Jim Wright of Texas. Who worked to squelch any congressional control over the CIA? Representative Edward Hebert of Louisiana. Who organized the opposition to the land-use bill? Sam Steiger of Arizona. Who led the battle against the bill to limit presidential war-making power? Senators John Tower of Texas and Paul Fannin of Arizona.

Obviously, a nation in the grip of such unrelieved malevolence is in a bad way. But just in the nick of time, as Richard Nixon was on the verge of consolidating dictatorial power and establishing a fully fascist state, there began to take shape an opposition comprising "segments of the Yankee structure . . . the prestige professoriate, the big-city newspapers, the liberal politicians, the non-construction unions, the Jewish intelligentsia, the big Democratic money, even some among the stockbrokers and investment bankers." The tradition of these enlightened forces emphasizes "intellectualism," "wracking guilt," and "uneasy welfarism," and although their conscious concern over Watergate centered on lawlessness in high places, their real motivating force was to stop the Cowboy takeover.

THE number, scope, and variety of mistakes, misstatements, and distortions in Sale's scenario greatly complicate the task of criticism. Least significant, except as symptoms of a more pervasive attitude toward truth, are the simple errors of fact: Lyndon Johnson was not a Baptist, Alger Hiss is not of "aristocratic birth," McGovern did not lose because he "failed to cling to his natural constituency . . . but tried to blur his positions to attract more conservative Democrats," Yale

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political scientist Fred Barghorn was not in Russia as a spy for the CIA, and as the Church Committee recently if reluctantly reminded us, John Kennedy was not launched on a program of détente at the time of his death, was not soft on Castro, and was not above using organized crime to achieve selected ends.

A more basic problem with *Power Shift* is that recent American history does not fit the simple frameworks into which Sale attempts to organize it. Richard Russell, John Stennis, George Wallace, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Jerry Brown simply do not exemplify a common culture or a common approach to public problems. Watergate was not the work of the Rim any more than its exposure was the work exclusively of Yankee professors and journalists. As Sale himself points out, Gordon Liddy, Charles Colson, Howard Hunt, James McCord, John Dean, and John Mitchell were not Rimsters; but Leon Jaworski, Sam Ervin, and Howard Baker were. The desire to fit the facts into an inadequate theory leads Sale to twist or ignore inconvenient evidence.

But the most serious failing of *Power Shift* is moral rather than intellectual. Sale's use of innuendo and his doctrine of functional guilt are reminiscent of the Moscow Trials. Thus he insinuates: "No doubt the truth about the assassination of Jack Kennedy will be a long time coming, if ever, but there is an old legal principle that can stand us in temporary stead in the meantime: *cui bono*—to whose advantage?—the idea that probable responsibility for an act lies with those with something to gain." There follows further slander of Lyndon Johnson and the region of his origin. Concerning the attempt on Wallace's life, Sale again offers slanderous innuendo:

> No, there is no evidence to link this particular deed with the Nixon coterie, who proved that they were capable of practically anything short of that, but it is interesting that Richard Nixon himself was sufficiently alarmed by the possibility of such links that he immediately ordered his close aides to check on the political background of the assassin and apparently told the FBI to go slow in its investigation until such a check was made. One can even speculate, reasonably, if without foundation, that it was fear that the Democrats had tumbled onto such a link which made urgent the [Watergate] break-in. . . .

There is nothing random in Sale's innuendo, distortion, and omission. It all has the effect of further blackening those aspects of the American tradition which Sale has marked for repudiation. Often the tainted portion seems coterminous with the whole American past. It is not only the congressmen from the Southern Rim who offend Sale's political morality, but the entire institution of the Congress which seems to him both corrupt and corrupting. It is not only Richard Nixon's men and Watergate which Sale rejects, but the whole sick society: Watergate reflects "not a single disease . . . not a single man" but the "ethical rot" of decades of "hysterical" anti-Communism, of seeking after empire, of mindless growth, corrupt politics, and "an ever engorging economy" which squanders the "world's" resources and has created a "material culture manufacturing the unneeded to be sold by the unprincipled to the unwary."

In short, we are back here to the racist, fascist, imperialist Amerika of the late 60's. *Power Shift* is an unremitting assault on the dominant American political culture, on the legitimacy of its institutions, its values, and its right to persist. Kirkpatrick Sale's perspective on American society is that of the SDS, the subject of a previous book by him, in which he observed that although not a member of that organization he had come to share "the same animus . . ., the same sense of dislocation from the nation, ultimately the same radicalization." His present view of America, however, has been relocated *within* the American tradition itself, with George McGovern, Elliot Richardson, Archibald Cox, Bernadine Dohrn, Carl Ogelsby, Kirkpatrick Sale, and all the other Yankee bluebloods on one side, and corrupt Amerika on the other.

There is nothing new in the idea that contemporary political conflict reflects fundamentally different cultural orientations and fundamentally different evaluations of the American experience. What is original in Sale's account are first, the labels Cowboy and Yankee; second, the implication that the (good) counterculture is somehow rooted in the Yankee tradition; and third, the concomitant effort to strip that tradition of most of its historical content, as though puritanism, the work ethic, economic growth, social mobility, patriotism, and anti-Communism were all conceived in and limited to the Southern Rim.

Power Shift is a contribution to the ongoing revisionist effort of recent years to transform the political culture of the country by systematically devaluing its institutions and historical beliefs. Sale is engaged less in scholarship than in myth-making, and the reception accorded *Power Shift* not only testifies to the parochialism and low scholarly standards of the "informed" public, but reflects the extent to which that public has already lost confidence in the legitimacy of the American experience. The fact that this loss of confidence, recently commented upon by Henry Fairlie in these pages,* springs less from historical failings than from a comparison with mythical perfections and utopian standards, does not render it less contagious or less deadly. In according *Power Shift* its coveted front page, the New York *Times Book Review* fuels the impression that the *Times* is, as Sale claims, on *his* side of the great cultural divide; and confirms the concern of those on the other side that the media are less a channel for communicating events than an agency for cultural revolution.

* "Anti-Americanism at Home and Abroad," December 1975.

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